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evo

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NICK TROTT

T **THIS IS MY 92ND AND** last issue of *evo*. I'm leaving to become the editor of *Motor Sport*. Motoring has seen extraordinary change in the seven years I've been with *evo*, and to witness the evolution of the performance car during this period has been unforgettable. The biggest thrill, however, has not been the cars, but the people – primarily you the reader and the *evo* team. As a reader you've joined us on a crusade to expand *evo* across new and exciting digital platforms, and have evangelised in a way that has always felt humbling. Thank you. *evo* will remain loyal to you, and reflect your love of driving, for many, many years to come.

evo's international and digital presence has never been higher. We started with pretty much bugger-all seven years ago – but now *evo.co.uk* is racing towards a million monthly 'uniques' and our YouTube channel is approaching 120million views. The print title has editions in China, India and Australia, not to mention another 14 territories – and I'd like to take this opportunity to say a special thank you to the dedicated editors of *evo*'s international titles around the world.

Of course, none of this could have been achieved without the exceptional work of the 'mothership' *evo* editorial team here in the UK. They remain the cream of the crop and will undoubtedly take *evo* to even greater heights. ✕



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Top to bottom: approaching take-off speed in Bentley's Flying Spur V8 S; Hunter Skipworth discovers his beard game is weak; road test editor Dan Prosser enjoys some hot rubber; Colin Goodwin admires his day's work

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‘A big, bluff wedge of
technology and mythology’

page 088

Ford

NEW FIESTA ST-LINE



Go Further

Official fuel consumption figures in mpg (l/100km) for Ford Fiesta ST-Line range: urban 50.4-65.7 (5.6-4.3), extra urban 72.4-88.3 (3.9-3.2), combined 62.8-78.5 (4.5-3.6).
Official CO₂ emissions 104-94g/km.

The mpg figures quoted are sourced from official EU-regulated test results (EU Directive and Regulation 692/2008), are provided for comparability purposes and may not reflect your actual driving experience.

RADAR

First look

**ALFA ROMEO
STELVIO**

New metal

**PORSCHE
911 RSR**

Motorsport

**AUDI WEC
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Tech

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Connectivity

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INTERIOR**



Jaguar I-Pace

Jaguar goes straight for Tesla's jugular with its first full EV

by ANTONY INGRAM

JAGUAR UNDERWENT AN AESTHETIC revolution when Ian Callum joined the company as director of design in 1999, but now the marque is set to undergo a powertrain revolution – headed by the car you see here.

Called the I-Pace and revealed at the Los Angeles motor show in November, it's an all-electric SUV concept that strongly previews a production car that's set to be revealed late in 2017 and hit the roads in 2018.

While echoing many of the trends we've seen in recent

Jaguar production models, the unique (for Jaguar) electric drivetrain has permitted significant changes to the firm's traditional cab-rearward proportions.

Here the emphasis is on a cab-forward shape – a benefit of not having to package a longitudinal engine beneath the bonnet. This in turn allows for more occupant space in a relatively small footprint, but it also results in a new aesthetic. 'The revolution is in the profile,' explains

Callum. 'I was determined from the very beginning of this project to create a design which reflected this change in the mechanics of the car.'

While the side profile isn't quite a one-box shape, it's far from the traditional three-box look of Jaguar's saloons. The car's footprint is smaller than that of Jaguar's F-Pace SUV (51mm shorter and 285mm narrower to be precise), but there's a long, 2990mm wheelbase (116mm longer), pushing the concept's 23in wheels

and 265/35 R23 tyres further out into the corners.

The lack of a combustion engine has allowed for a lower bonnet-line, yet the I-Pace manages a muscular look with pronounced front and rear wings and headlights positioned lower than they are on the F-Pace. The roofline is low, too, but a completely flat cabin floor – another benefit of the electric drivetrain – means interior volume is still large.

A compound benefit of the

SPECIFICATION

Engine	Permanent-magnet electric motor, 90kWh battery pack
Power	395bhp
Torque	516lb ft
0-60mph	4.0sec (estimated)
Top speed	n/a
Weight	n/a
Basic price	£60,000 (est)
On sale	2018 (production version)

“ It doesn't look a million miles from production ”

0.29
Cd

Drag coefficient. An F-Pace's is 0.34

90
minutes

to replenish 80 per cent of the battery charge

2018

When the first production cars are expected

220
miles

Realistic range estimate for the production car

Below: electric-car architecture allows some design freedom, yet the I-Pace still has to have a look that buyers can be comfortable with. **Right:** concept's design details both stylish and fun



drivetrain and the effect it has on the car's shape is aerodynamics: the I-Pace has a drag coefficient of 0.29, compared with 0.34 for the F-Pace, or 0.33 for the similarly coupe-like BMW X4. Aerodynamic drag is the real killer of range at higher speeds in electric vehicles, so the I-Pace needs all the help it can get.

Jaguar estimates a full-to-empty range of 310 miles by European testing standards from a 90kWh battery – the same capacity as that of a Tesla Model S P90D – but an estimated EPA-rated range of 220 miles (as used in the United States) is likely to be a more accurate indication of the Jaguar's reach. Charging can be carried out all the usual ways, with 50kWDC quick charging replenishing 80 per cent of your range in around 90 minutes.

The battery itself sits inside an aluminium shell that forms part of the car's structure. It's thermally managed: cooled and warmed to

the optimal point by a liquid cooling circuit according to the outside temperature.

Front suspension is by double-wishbones, derived from that of the F-type and F-Pace, while the rear uses Jaguar's Integral Link setup – a multi-link system by any other name – as used in the XE, XF and F-Pace. Jaguar is proud of the rear arrangement, which allows engineers to tune longitudinal and lateral stiffness independently, theoretically giving excellent handling characteristics without compromising ride quality.

Power comes from a pair of electric motors, one per axle. They're compact and each is coupled to a concentric-mounted epicyclic transmission, further freeing up packaging space. Combined output is 395bhp, but as with other electric vehicles it's the 516lb ft of torque that most will become familiar with. With drive to all four wheels, putting this twist to the tarmac will be simple

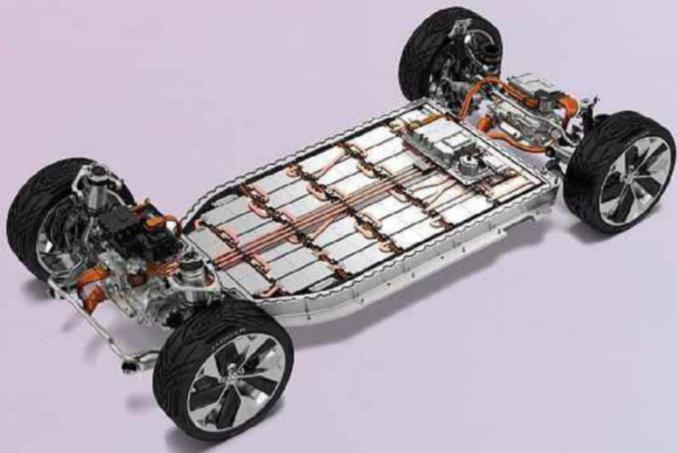


RIVAL TESLA MODEL X



Tesla's falcon-winged Model X SUV is available from £72,280 for the 75kWh-battery model with a 269-mile range. The seven-seat SUV not only provides the space and convenience expected of such cars, but this being Tesla it's also open to endless software and performance updates. The range-topping P90D is capable of sprinting to 62mph in 2.9sec in 'ludicrous' mode. That's a match for an Aventador LP700-4. The I-Pace won't have it all its own way.





enough and regenerative braking will allow single-pedal driving much of the time, just as it does in cars such as BMW's i3. It's likely some kind of adjustment will be possible to lower or increase the regenerative effect, to make best use of the car's abilities and to suit different driving styles.

Some healthy performance figures are quoted. Jaguar hasn't confirmed a top speed for the I-Pace – that's likely to be limited somewhat compared with conventionally powered Jags to preserve range – but push the right-hand pedal to the bulkhead and 60mph will pass in 'around four seconds'.

The impression from within should be suitably serene. There are no Tesla Model X-style gimmicks here – just four doors and a hatchback, and a cabin that looks considerably higher-quality than anything Tesla has produced. It also doesn't look a million miles from production, with few of the whimsical, pigs-might-fly details you'd expect from something billed as a concept.

There are certainly useful touches, however. Cabin climate – a touchy subject in the world of electric vehicles, since the use of heating, ventilation and air conditioning can rapidly deplete the battery – is controlled by a heat pump. This uses energy from the outside air to warm the cabin, rather than relying on power-hungry electric heaters, and contributes around 31 miles to the car's range compared with a

conventionally heated equivalent in cold weather.

Interior materials are a mixture of Windsor leather, Alcantara, coloured carbonfibre and unvarnished walnut veneers. The roof is a full-length glass panel with embedded LEDs that illuminate after sundown. The flat floor liberates plenty of space for legs (and has allowed the seats to be positioned lower, for a more conventional Jaguar driving position) and for interior stowage, with a large

volume of space in the centre console. Overall luggage space is 558 litres: 530 in the boot, and another 28 litres where you'd normally find an engine.

Minor controls are either via a traditional knurled rotary controller or by touchscreen, and the unique centre console, seemingly suspended on struts, actually rises up to meet the driver when the car is switched on. A 12-inch TFT touchscreen dominates the dashboard, with a 5.5-inch screen below it for infotainment and climate.

The I-Pace will be hugely important for Jaguar, and not just because Ian Hoban, vehicle line director at JLR, describes electric vehicles as 'inevitable'. The company predicts that the I-Pace will be, for many, the first electric car they own.

The I-Pace doesn't just need to be good – it must also make a positive impression for those new to the Jaguar brand, and reassure loyal, existing customers that the company is heading in the right direction.

IAN CALLUM TALKS I-PACE

The I-Pace's architecture, which does away with the need to accommodate an internal combustion engine at the front, means Jaguar design director Ian Callum and his team have been able to produce a stunning and innovative design with hints of 2010's C-X75 concept.

'Designers have been looking forward to electric cars for a long time,' says Ian Callum. 'They give you permission to do things that you can't do when you have an internal combustion engine to work around.'

'We started off with a skateboard-like platform that enabled us to bring the cab forward in spite of it being an SUV. The wheelbase was decided by the number and size of batteries that we needed to fit between the axles.'

The cab-forward design

has enabled Callum to give the I-Pace strong haunches at the front of the car. Like the C-X75, the bonnet has a distinct dip and a scoop towards the back to reduce drag.

In spite of the low front and short overhangs, there's a bold front grille framed by slim lights, as on the F-Pace. 'It's important we establish the front as a Jaguar,' states Callum. 'The headlights of today's style have double J-blades – that's something we'll see more and more on Jaguars.'

Sweeping lines along the sides and a tapering waistline give the five-door SUV a coupe-like profile, leading to a sharply angled rear screen with a hydrophobic coating – so there's no need for a rear wiper.

Rear vents sit where tailpipes would usually be and channel

air from the rear wheelarches to reduce drag. LED tail lights echo the look of other Jaguars, but are squared off for a more technical feel. 'We're relatively high at the back with quite square edges for optimum aerodynamics,' says Callum.

In spite of the temptations created by the electrical architecture, Callum says that you still have to have familiar hardware, yet around the traditional driving position are three touchscreens. There are plenty of delightful design details inside the I-Pace, with Jaguar's lozenge pattern on everything from the leather seats to the speaker grilles, while laser-etched into the burr walnut dash are the words 'Lovingly crafted by Jaguar. Est Coventry 1935'.

Steve Fowler

Left: I-Pace concept's interior enjoys some freedom of design afforded to motor-show stars, but the production car will differ only very slightly when it goes on sale in 2018.
Bottom left: batteries are thermally managed to optimise range



After critical acclaim for the Giulia, Alfa is hoping for a repeat performance from its new 503bhp twin-turbo SUV

Alfa Romeo Stelvio



“ We need convincing Alfa can build a competitive product full-stop ”

THE LOS ANGELES LOCATION chosen for the launch of Alfa Romeo's first SUV is no coincidence. If an SUV will succeed anywhere, it's in the United States, and the Stelvio is the car that will make or break Alfa's name in one of the world's biggest and most influential automotive markets.

But it's important for us too. Manufacturers such as Porsche and BMW have already demonstrated it's possible to build an SUV that appeals to driving enthusiasts, but Alfa has much more work to do to convince us.

In its last two launches, the 4C sports car and Giulia saloon, only the latter has hit the mark. Forget the heresy of Alfa Romeo building an SUV; we need more convincing it can build a competitive product full-stop.

The Stelvio gets off to a good start, not least because Alfa has unveiled the car, as it did with the Giulia, in range-topping Quadrifoglio specification. Like the cloverleaf-badged saloon, the Stelvio gets a 2.9-litre twin-turbo V6 – designed and constructed with input from Ferrari – developing 503bhp. Less power than a BMW

X5 M, but enough to get it to 62mph in 3.9sec and on to 177mph. Cylinder deactivation prevents the contents of your wallet disappearing at a similarly rapid pace.

Transmitting that power to the road is a standard eight-speed ZF automatic transmission, similar to that in the Giulia, though the Stelvio also comes with standard Q4 all-wheel drive with torque vectoring. In normal conditions the Stelvio sends 100 per cent of its power to the rear wheels, with two clutches in the rear differential to meter out power as required to either wheel. A central active transfer case can then transmit torque between the axles, sending up to 50 per cent to the front wheels if necessary. Alfa claims intervention from the stability control system should be minimal.

Other engine choices will echo those of the Giulia range. A 276bhp, 2-litre turbocharged petrol has been confirmed, with a 5.4sec 0-62mph time and an eight-speed ZF auto, but a variant of the 2.2-litre four-cylinder turbodiesel is highly likely.

As with the Jaguar I-Pace on the

previous pages, the Stelvio uses double-wishbone suspension up front and a multi-link axle astern. Damping is electronically controlled while braking for the Quadrifoglio uses carbon-ceramic discs as standard.

Alfa's DNA Pro system also makes a reappearance, allowing the driver to alter the characteristics of the car's dynamics and powertrain. In Race mode (Dynamic, Natural and Advanced Efficiency modes can also be selected) the stability control system is relaxed, gearchange times cut and the steering, dampers and throttle responses are all ramped up to more intense settings.

You'll note that we've avoided mention of the Stelvio's styling until now. It will undoubtedly take a little getting used to; bear in mind, though, the tsunami of negative comment about Porsche's first Cayenne, and then consider how much money it made the company. So we'll overlook the slightly awkward looks if the Stelvio drives as well as the Giulia.

There's no word yet on pricing, but expect the Stelvio to arrive in UK showrooms during 2017.



Aston Martin Vanquish S

ASTON MARTIN'S WORLD MAY CURRENTLY be consumed by all things DB11, but this doesn't mean it has forgotten about the models that still have a few more years' life left in them. Models such as the Vanquish.

Now available in £199,950 Vanquish S trim, its 5.9-litre naturally aspirated V12 has undergone a refresh, resulting in power climbing from 568bhp to 595bhp. The engine work includes a redesigned, larger-capacity intake manifold to increase airflow at higher revs. The 0-62mph time drops three-tenths to 3.5sec as a result, but top speed remains 201mph.

The eight-speed Touchtronic III auto gearbox gets a tweak, and so too the springs, dampers and anti-roll bars. There's also a new aero kit finished in carbonfibre.



Porsche 911 RSR

THERE WERE TEARS IN THE PADDOCK when Porsche arrived at Le Mans in the summer only to discover Ford had been sandbagging in the opening rounds of the 2016 World Endurance Championship with its new GT racer.

For 2017, then, Porsche has thoroughly redeveloped its 911 RSR to provide its factory team with the best possible GT racer for tackling the challenge from Ford and others.

Changes include a new mid-mounted (yes, a 911 that's not

rear-engined) normally aspirated, 503bhp 4-litre flat-six engine. Meanwhile, the aero design of the carbonfibre bodywork – including a sizeable rear diffuser – is claimed to be on a par with that of the Le Mans-winning LMP1 919 Hybrid. There is also a radar-based 'Collision Avoid System' to detect fast-approaching LMP cars and warn RSR drivers of potential danger.

Porsche anticipates entering 19 races with the RSR in 2017, debuting at the Daytona 24 Hours in January.

Huracán RWD Spyder

AS NIGHT FOLLOWS DAY, SO A REAR-wheel-drive Lamborghini Huracán Spyder follows in the tyre tracks of the rear-drive Huracán coupe launched in 2016.

It's called simply Huracán RWD Spyder (Lamborghini is abandoning its traditional 'LP' nomenclature across its range) and as with the coupe, the Spyder features new front and rear bumpers to distinguish it from its all-wheel-drive counterpart. The 5.2-litre V10

remains untouched (so 572bhp and 397lb ft – 30bhp and 16lb ft less than the four-wheel-drive models) and drives through a seven-speed dual-clutch transmission.

With a 1509kg dry weight – a 120kg increase over the coupe – the Spyder will sprint to 62mph in 3.6sec (two-tenths slower than the coupe) before topping out at 199mph.

The RWD Spyder goes on sale in January 2017, priced at around £170,000.





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Continental GT Speed fuel consumption – EU Drive Cycle in mpg (l/100 km):
Urban 13 (21.8); Extra Urban 27.4 (10.3); Combined 19.3 (14.6). CO₂ Emissions 338 g/km.

The name 'Bentley' and the 'B' in wings device are registered trademarks. © 2016 Bentley Motors Limited. Model shown: Continental GT Speed

New McLaren hyper-GT

Limited-edition three-seater hybrid echoes fabled F1

McLAREN HAS CONFIRMED IT IS TO build a new 'hyper-GT', which will echo the legendary F1's three-seat layout and central driving position. The car, codenamed BP23 (Bespoke Project 2, three seats) will be built by McLaren Special Operations, with production limited to 106 examples, of which all have been pre-sold.

So what are you missing? It will feature a hybrid powertrain, although McLaren CEO Mike Flewitt hasn't confirmed if this will be based on the P1's V8 powertrain

or a new V6 rumoured to be in the pipeline for next year's 650S replacement. A 'shrink-wrapped' carbonfibre body will sit on top of a carbon chassis.

Designed to be a hyper-GT rather than a hypercar, Flewitt says it's intended for longer journeys and that the dihedral doors will be powered and open into the car's roof. The interior will be trimmed in unique materials and fitted with bespoke switchgear. First deliveries are expected in early 2019. And the price? Er, if you have to ask...

No go for Clio RS16



RENAULT HAS CONFIRMED THAT ITS Mégane Trophy-engined, 271bhp Clio RS16 concept will remain just that, and will not be put into production, limited or otherwise.

'Due to the complexity of the Clio RS16 we would have had to utilise the expertise of the Alpine plant in Dieppe, where it is possible to make very low volume, hand-built cars,' said a Renault Sport spokesman. 'In the past this has included the Clio V6, Spider and, currently, a number of competition cars such as the Clio Cup and Formula Renault single-seaters.'

'The plant is currently gearing up for production of the Alpine Vision sports coupe. Because of this, the decision was taken not to divert attention from this new project to build a limited run of Clio RS16s. There was an option of delaying the RS16 until after Alpine production had started, but this would have delayed [the Clio's] introduction until the first half of 2018 and this would have been too long for customers to have waited for the car.'

New Golf GTI



TRUST US, THIS IS THE NEW GOLF GTI. The 2-litre turbocharged four-cylinder engine gets a power hike from 217bhp to 227bhp, equalling that of the outgoing Performance Pack model, while the new Performance Pack model produces 241bhp.

The six-speed manual gearbox is retained and the ageing six-speed DSG option will eventually (though not initially) be replaced with a new seven-speed dual-clutch unit.

Other changes include new front and rear bumpers inspired by the previous generation Clubsport model and LED headlights and tail lights.

London Classic Car Show

THE LONDON CLASSIC CAR SHOW returns in 2017, hosted by London's ExCeL centre on 23-26 February. Over 700 classic cars will be on display, while a new Historic Motorsport International element will showcase engineers, preparers, retailers, etc from the field of historic motorsport. **evo** and sister title *Octane* will also be showcasing some of the world's greatest concept cars from the past and present. Advance ticket sales are now available at thelondonclassiccarshow.com.



'New' Jaguar XKSS revealed

JAGUAR CLASSIC REVEALED THE first of nine 'new' XKSS continuation models at the Petersen Museum in Los Angeles in November.

The nine additional cars are being manufactured from the ground up and use period chassis numbers from the original XKSS chassis log. In period these numbers were allocated to cars

that were destined for North America but were destroyed in a fire at Jaguar's Browns Lane factory in 1957.

Made from magnesium alloy, the bodies of the new XKSSs are created using original production methods. They will be fitted with an updated 262bhp, 3.4-litre straight-six based on the D-type engine.





INSIGHT

The Racing Insider

Audi's gone, so the WEC needs to raise its game

AND SO ENDS AUDI'S 18-year run at Le Mans, while Formula E's status as the biggest type of motorsport outside of F1 is confirmed. Of course, it's not so simple. Nothing ever is. Especially in motorsport. Unless you believe car forums on the internet, that is.

The truth is, pushing diesel sales in the USA through illegal actions has meant the VW Group is now under huge financial pressure. Meanwhile, diesel has been put in a negative spotlight. Conversely, the automotive world has just woken up and realised that Elon Musk might actually have a point.

Faced with these facts, what would you do? Yup—cut expenditure (you have two brands at Le Mans so one can go), reduce marketing on diesel (one of your brands has diesel engines at Le Mans, so that's the obvious fall guy) and increase marketing on electric vehicles (you are already half in Formula E with

Audi). Simple. These decisions will result in many consequences to our sport, most yet to be understood.

Motorsport programmes can be started and ended for all sorts of reasons that even the closest observers of the sport can't compute. I have seen first hand decisions that I can't possibly fathom and I was part of the team supposed to be managing the decision process. Peugeot's withdrawal from Prototype racing was obvious, Infiniti into BTCC was not. Jaguar into F1: ill thought through. Honda's last withdrawal from F1: just one year too early. And the list goes on. Nissan stories? They'll have to wait...

Audi is a big fish in the motorsport pond with big budgets (still). So stating that it is racing in Formula E 'instead' of the World Endurance Championship is big news.

I have previously stated that Jaguar committing to Formula E was the tipping point. Since then

Mercedes, BMW and Audi have increased their commitment to the series in different ways. But for Audi to do so and stop its long-standing and successful Prototype programme will see a change in the balance of power.

The WEC has been riding on the crest of several waves in recent years and has made key decisions based on that momentum continuing. It's now faced with the prospect of a weakened top category and, because of its own actions, no privateers ready to fill the R18-sized hole. Audi will talk of other brands coming in, but all those brands will want a serious review of the rules structure to reduce costs to an acceptable level.

However, Formula E still has teething problems. Many of them. But electric racing in cities is the right thing at the right time. The lithium rush towards electric cars and now racing reminds me of a

brilliant quote from the *Wall Street Journal* about electric cars: 'It is the nature of disruptive technological shifts that it seems like nothing is changing – until it seems as if everything is changing at once.' The tide is turning towards Formula E faster than anyone can foresee.

Conversely the WEC has got to have a bit of a rethink. And one area of thought needs to be around this quote from the new head of Audi Sport: 'People tend to have a time of attention which is shorter than a minute, usually. So if you have races which are very long, this is very difficult to watch on TV.'

Now, as a 24-hour-racing disciple I'm not saying we should cut Le Mans to 24 minutes. Yet cricket has T:20 and five-day tests. As with everything, though, the decision makers need to take care of those unintended consequences. But they need to move fast or lose more ground to the new **Big Electric Thing in the cities.**

“People tend to have a time of attention which is shorter than a minute, usually. So if you have races that are very long, this is hard to watch on TV”



Darren is the former head of Nismo and was the architect of the Nissan GT Academy



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HONDA 2017 Civic to court evo audience

New suspension and smaller but punchier engines should give greater driver appeal

JAPANESE CAR COMPANIES tend to keep schtum when they've screwed up on product, but Honda is taking a much more open approach with its admission that the existing Civic hasn't quite cut the mustard.

In fact, the firm devoted a third of its entire research and development workforce to the project to develop a tenth generation of the bread-and-butter hatchback that could appeal to drivers as well as, well, Honda's relatively elderly faithful clientele.

CHASSIS

There are two main areas of significant change. First and foremost is the chassis, a ground-up redesign that does away with the old Civic's torsion beam rear suspension in favour of a more complex multi-link setup. Honda originally plumped for the beam on grounds of cost and packaging; the result, project leader Mitsuru Kariya admits, was not a car that appealed to enthusiastic drivers. 'Once we decided to try to get back to the keen responses that have appealed to so many Civic drivers over the years,' he says, 'it was clear we had to go for a different suspension solution.'

Aside from the suspension configuration, the platform is built in an about-face way, with inner frame made before its outer frame, to help improve torsional rigidity. Throw in greater use of high-tensile steel and you end up with



“
There's enough to suggest that when the whole package is cranked up for the next Type R, it has the potential to be a road and track hero
”

a substructure that is 16kg lighter than the chassis it replaces, but 41 per cent more rigid. The overall body's resistance to flexing is up by 65 per cent, too.

ADAPTIVE DAMPERS

Honda believes it is scoring a major hit with mainstream buyers by offering selected new Civic models with adaptive dampers. Most likely to be available on the 1.5 initially, the adaptive dampers have two settings – 'regular' and 'dynamic' – and use three-axis body sensors to make judgements and then activate solenoids to control oil flow through the system, thereby adjusting the rate of damping.

We've had a short drive of a Sport-spec 1.5 Civic already, and the difference was muted; body control does tighten up in 'dynamic', but only slightly. There is undoubtedly scope for more extreme settings, though.

ENGINES

Honda has resisted the trend for downsized, turbocharged petrol engines more than most, but it finally gives in with the new Civic, which gets either a 1-litre three-

cylinder producing 127bhp and 147lb ft, or a 1.5-litre four-pot with 180bhp and 177lb ft. Those figures aren't that remarkable on paper, but they are by Honda standards, and the spreads of torque – useable from less than 2000rpm in the 1.5 – will feel pretty alien to those used to VTEC normally aspirated engines that need working hard.

WHAT OF THE TYPE R?

Honda's efforts haven't quite turned the Civic into a B-road weapon. But there's enough to suggest that when the whole package is cranked up to make the next Type R, it has the potential to be both a road and track hero, with a longer wheelbase aiding cornering stability, a more resolved and capable chassis and, one must assume, a bespoke setting for the adaptive dampers.

Indeed, there seems little doubt that the next Type R will have a front-drive chassis that can cope with even more power. And this could explain why, when you suggest a figure of 340bhp, Honda's engineers only raise their eyebrows by the tiniest degree.



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IN-CAR TECHNOLOGY

5-series fights back in technology arms race

Gesture control, a touchscreen interface and Apple CarPlay bring BMW's saloon up to date

THE BMW 5-SERIES HAD some serious catching up to do in terms of technology. No surprise, then, that after being overshadowed by the new Audi A5 and Mercedes E-class models released in 2016, BMW's latest 5-series (Radar, *evo* 229), which arrives in showrooms in February, borrows heavily from the interior gadgetry of the 7-series to level the playing field.

Amongst the armoury is a new optional gesture-control system that enables you to interact with the infotainment system by making hand movements in front of the central display. In some ways this is total tech overkill, but being able to turn the stereo volume up using nothing other than your little finger is certainly a slick touch.

The car's head-up display has

a higher resolution than that of the outgoing model, allowing for more detail in its graphics, but the biggest update is a move to the latest version of iDrive, which comes with a 10.25-inch high-resolution screen that is touch-sensitive. This touchscreen makes the iDrive system much quicker to use than it is with the traditional clickwheel and finally brings smartphone-like control to the car's infotainment system. Speaking of which, a new 'message centre' within the iDrive acts as a one-stop shop for text messages, emails and other information.

Music lovers will appreciate the extensive hi-fi options. As standard you get a six-speaker setup, but you can move all the way up to a full-fat Bowers & Wilkins surround-sound arrangement. This features a ten-

channel amplifier, 16 speakers and diamond tweeters (made from industrially manufactured diamond, the rigidity of which is said to improve sound reproduction). If the B&W system sounds anything like the one in the 7-series, it should be utterly fantastic. Rear-seat passengers can also enjoy an 'entertainment Experience system', which adds twin HD screens and the ability to connect a PlayStation 4 or Xbox One console.

The 5-series is very much laden with tech, then, but like the 7-series before it, there does seem to be a few unnecessary features. Take, for example, the Ambient Air Package, which will ionise the air inside the car (improving its quality by removing particles from it) and, should you so desire, add some fragrance into the mix.

But the best feature in the latest 5-series? Easily the new wireless Apple CarPlay, which allows you to interact with an iPhone through iDrive without a cable. It's currently the best in-car infotainment system out there.

Hunter Skipworth

TARGET ACQUIRED

Europe's best driving routes on your satnav



We're used to satnavs directing us to our destinations via the shortest route, the most economical one, or even the road least trafficked. But until now it's been relatively difficult to find your destination via the most entertaining or picturesque route – the kind of route that *evo* readers might prioritise.

TomTom has come up with a solution by researching and mapping 25 trips that it considers the best driving routes in Europe, all of which can be downloaded to TomTom devices.

Categorised into woodland, coastal, mountainous, historical and 'most epic' routes, the 25 trips include everything from the stunning Transfăgărășan Highway in Romania and Trollstigen in Norway to more familiar routes such as the Stelvio and Furka passes in the Alps – as well as Iceland's ring road, driven this issue (p104).

The routes are compatible with any TomTom device using the brand's MyDrive system. It's simply a case of selecting your chosen route on TomTom's website, syncing it with your device and booking the required time off work to complete your route. Best of all, it's free.

ON OR OFF?



Radar cruise control

'I'm not sure this is quite ready yet,' says *evo* reader Chris Rest. 'It has an annoying habit of slowing you down just as you're about to pass something – seemingly from half a mile back.'

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WATCH TECH

Patek Philippe Nautilus

Patek Philippe's Nautilus was considered outrageous when it first appeared in 1976 with the proud advertising boast that 'One of the world's costliest watches is made of steel.' But it wasn't just the 15,000-franc (c£1800) asking price of the Nautilus that made it stand out – its case design was pretty special, too.

Penned by the celebrated watch designer Gérald Genta, the Nautilus was named after the famously watertight mollusc and produced in a unique shape said to have been based on that of a ship's porthole – right down to the two 'ears' that emulate the locking mechanisms designed to prevent the ingress of seawater.

Closer inspection of the design reveals even greater complexity: the bezel is octagonal and the steel bracelet on which all original models were supplied is fully integrated into the large-for-the-era 42mm case, making for an apparently seamless join. Guaranteed waterproof to 120 metres, the Nautilus was, despite its hefty price tag, intended to be a true tool watch.

To mark the 40th anniversary of the model, Patek Philippe recently introduced two limited editions – a platinum-cased three-hander at £82,310 and a white gold chronograph at £69,960.



THIS MONTH

MB&F Horological Machine No. 8

Price: from £72,000
From: MBandF.com

The latest 'Horological Machine' from avant-garde maker MB&F is said to have been inspired by the early years of Can-Am racing. The side-on time display makes the watch easy to read while holding a steering wheel, and the framework surrounding the sapphire crystal prisms that form the top of the case is said to be reminiscent of a Can-Am car's roll-cage. Titanium or red gold versions are available.

TAG Heuer Connected La Carrera Panamericana

Price: £1100
From: tagheuer.com

TAG Heuer is celebrating its role as sponsor and official timekeeper of the famously gruelling Carrera Panamericana road race with the introduction of a special dial for its Connected smartwatch. The 'virtual' dial can be downloaded through the Google Play store and is highlighted in the colours of the Mexican flag and displays a map of the country overlaid with an image of a 1950s Ferrari.

Omologato 917 Salzburg

Price: £329
From: omologatowatches.com

Omologato has just added this Porsche 917 tribute piece to its fast-expanding range. Based on the red, white and black livery of the 1970 Le Mans-winning number 23 car entered by the Porsche Salzburg team and driven by Richard Attwood and Hans Herrmann, the 43mm-diameter chronograph is supplied on a leather strap with racy red stitching. Just 200 of the quartz-powered watches will be made.

CHRONO



Read more from Simon de Burton in *Chrono*, the interactive watch magazine for iPad and iPhone, available now from the iTunes Store.



HANHART SINGLE-BUTTON FLIEGER CHRONOGRAPH

As worn by Peter Bradfield, London-based classic car dealer

'I became interested in watches about ten years ago when, after selling a Ferrari GTO, I decided to reward myself with a Rolex Cosmograph – but I soon realised I didn't really like it. I have subsequently fallen in love with vintage Tudor

watches, and that has led me to an interest in military watches in general.

'Earlier this year, I bought a Hanhart single-button pilot's watch at a Bonhams auction. It is absolutely wonderful and I wear it a

great deal. It was made in 1939, so went through the war, maybe on the wrist of a Luftwaffe pilot or navigator. Who can really say? But I would love to know the full story of its journey from Germany 77 years ago to London in 2016.'



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LETTER OF THE MONTH

Cayman, feel the noise

THE OPENING PARAGRAPH TO HENRY Catchpole's review of the Porsche 718 Cayman (Driven, *evo* 229) relates why people, upon hearing the V8 in a muscle car growl to life, are able to justify the outlay despite other elements of the car perhaps not being as refined as they could be. I think he's nailed the point of *evo*ness for me in just a couple of sentences.

I test drove a new V8 Mustang yesterday. I love the way the car looks, the way it turns heads, and I liked the way it went down the road, stopped and handled the bends. But I was actually hooked the second the engine started. The engine is the soul of any car, and for that reason I could never buy an EcoBoost Mustang, nor could I ever buy a

four-cylinder Porsche, no matter how well it handled. It'd be like having a concert without the music.

James Thomas

The Letter of the Month wins an Aviator watch

The writer of this month's star letter receives an Aviator MIG-29 Chrono, worth £465. With a design inspired by the cockpit instruments of a MIG-29 fighter jet, it has a 45mm case, a Swiss-made quartz movement, and SuperLuminova indexes for outstanding legibility.

Peter Jackson



Unobtainium of the Year

So the winner of *evo*'s Car of the Year 2016 (issue 229) is a 911 R, a car we cannot buy. Also in the running is an Aston Martin Vantage GT8, which is a limited-run model, and the BMW M4 GTS – all gone. And VW's Golf GTI Clubsport S? Yep, also sold out.

How about restricting your contenders to cars that are actually for sale? I know that would eliminate some wonderful machinery, but if the manufacturers are going to play silly marketing games that restrict purchase of these cars to their best customers, why should your magazine promote them to the benefit of the chosen few?

I want to know what's the best car I can buy if I pop down to my local dealer. A 911 R is no longer in that category.

Roger Willatt, Barton on Sea, Hampshire

Unobtainium, part two

In his Ed Speak (*evo* 229), Nick Trott says the Renault Sport Clio RS16 was not included in eCoty 2016 because 'if it won, you couldn't buy it – and that doesn't seem fair'. Surely the same goes for the 911 R, and last year's winner, the Cayman GT4?

I paid my deposit for a GT4 and specced the car, but then later received my deposit back as they could not fulfil all orders. A quick search on the Porsche Approved website reveals a glut for sale but all at a huge premium.

So after a 993, a Cayman R,

EVO'S MONTH



92

Number of issues of *evo* that departing editor Nick Trott has presided over. (His first was *evo* 139, pictured.)

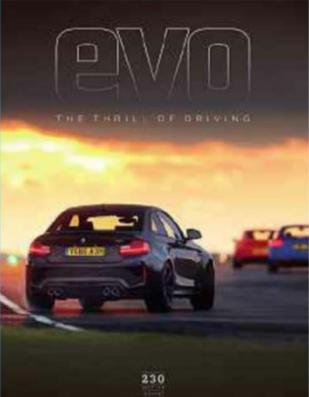
‘Oh my god. Maserati MC12 Corsa. 750bhp, no ABS or TC. I’m going to have to man up! At least it’s raining!’



This month's subscribers' cover

BMW M2 on track, photographed by Dean Smith.

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then a 997 GTS, Porsche loses a loyal customer, not that it is bothered. However, as your magazine often shows, there is always an alternative option. People switch allegiances to never return, and that is what I did.

So could next year's eCoty feature a winner that we can actually buy?

David Tysall

These are just two of many letters we received suggesting that the 911 R (pictured below) and other eCoty contenders should have been excluded from the test because of their restricted availability.

We chose to include such cars because they have actually been on sale – if not necessarily easy or affordable to acquire – during the 12 months prior to the eCoty test. That's not something that can be said of the Clio RS16. We also wanted to discover where these cars rank among the year's best.

Do you agree with our decision? Let us know at letters@evo.co.uk

finished last in that group, but it could still be considered our Everyday Car of the Year title winner.



The thrill beyond driving

So, the thrill of driving in 2016 is best experienced in a 911 R? If you could take the Porsche back to the last millennium (where you'd find a similar car winning eCoty) you'd probably find space on the roads to justify your choice. But in 2016? Nah. In 2016 you have to look beyond just the driving.

What makes a car desirable? The looks, the sound, the innovation, the opportunity to imagine that you're James Bond. These are the kind of things you can enjoy every day in 2016. The Porsche may drive brilliantly, but that's all it's got.

David Risley



He knows the score

eCoty celebrates the thrill of driving, not maths, but the problem of dealing with highly emotive cars like the BMW M4 GTS is an easy one to solve: simply discard the highest and lowest judges' scores for each car. This year's results would stay largely the same but the BMW would finish two points below the Alfa Romeo, not tied. Fans of Olympic gymnastics will recognise this 'trimmed mean' scoring system, where it's used to help minimise judging bias.

Scoring system aside, the wide variance in judges' scores was caused by a field containing not one but three highly polarising cars – the M4 GTS, Lamborghini Huracán LP580-2 and Aston Martin Vantage GT8. When one quarter of your sample has these qualities – coupled with judges who know what they like – then results will always look a little unusual.

(I knew those dreary statistics lectures would come in useful one day.)

Mike Spencer

RealCoty

evo is about the thrill of driving, and as readers we aspire to driving, on road and track, the same cars as you fortunate journalists. However, we live in the real world, where funds are limited and many of these cars are unobtainable and the running costs are extortionate. Therefore, may I suggest that in addition to the Aspirational Car of the Year test you start an **evo** Everyday Car of the Year? To qualify a car must seat four adults comfortably and cost no more than the average person can afford (say 1.5 times the average national salary).

James Wyatt, London

The BMW M2 (pictured above right) comes pretty close – four seats, £44k – and it earned itself a place in our no-restrictions eCoty test. It may have

PDK all the way

In response to Antony Couch's Letter of the Month in issue 229, I would like to defend Richard Porter and his thoughts on gearbox choice (Petrolhead, 228).

Earlier this year I was inspired by articles in **evo** to search for a Caterham. I now own a Boxster with a PDK gearbox because, like Richard, I have to live in the real world and the car has to fulfil multiple roles, not just be a trackday special.

I agree that lighter, focused, 'analogue' cars are the ideal for the thrill of driving, but as Richard wrote earlier in the year, that will increasingly become the preserve of the track, where these cars can be driven at the limit and every kilogram matters. Driving a 911 GT3 RS to 100 per cent of its capabilities on public roads is not being a petrolhead, that quite frankly is being a knobhead.

Until I have the space and resources for that beautiful track car, I will enjoy driving the Boxster at nine-tenths and rent a car and instructor for the track when I can.

Ian Chisnall



Front runners

Mr Galanopoulos (Inbox, **evo** 228) was right to mention that the Mk1 Focus RS was far from being the most powerful front-wheel-drive car in 2002, but his research should have been more diligent, because the King of Front Wheel Drive Hill wasn't the Cadillac STS at all, but the 1966 Oldsmobile Toronado [pictured above], the most powerful iteration of which packed a 385bhp V8 punch.

Also noteworthy for being almost as powerful as the Focus is the Cord 810, the supercharged V8 version of which pushed out 185bhp – over six decades earlier.

John Aston, North Yorkshire



McLaren madness

Ten million quid for a McLaren F1 (McLaren megatest, **evo** 228)? \$160,000 bought my brother a much faster car: a 2010 Ultima running a supercharged Corvette Z06 7011cc engine. It has 160bhp more than the McLaren, is 100kg lighter and is cheap to run and repair. Carbon wheels and brakes are in that price too.

All that for the price of a new Range Rover!

Ian Neal

Gone soft

When Dean Smith first got his Peugeot 308 GTi long-termer, I saw the 'you cannot see the speedo' comment and ignored it as just the usual gripe. However, I can't ignore his latest gripe. The stiffest ride he's had in a long time (Fast Fleet, **evo** 229)? He must have been driving some incredibly soft cars, then, or has been given an 'enhanced' version of his car, as my 308 GTi 270 has quite a comfortable ride for such a sporty hatch.

Maybe it isn't an everyday car for the everyday person, but for someone who is interested in driving, the 308 GTi's ride feels to me like one of the softest available.

Murray Walton

Correction corner

I hate enhancing my reputation as a right nerd, but in your short piece on the Peugeot L76 (Tech game-changer, **evo** 227) you state that having four valves per cylinder 'helps increase the area occupied by the valves'.

Strictly speaking, four valves increase the valves' total *circumference*. When the valves open they form a hoop, not a hole.

I'm just saying like.

James May

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THE TEAM

This month, we asked our team which car they are most looking forward to driving in 2017



NICK TROTT
Editor

'The McLaren 650S replacement. Can't wait to find out if it will have a V6 twin-turbo hybrid.'



STUART GALLAGHER
Managing editor

'The Alpine Vision. It's prevented the Clio RS16 from being built, so it needs to be mega.'



DAN PROSSER
Road test editor

'Ford GT. Think Maslow had it second in his hierarchy of needs.'



RICHARD MEADEN
Contributing editor

'Hopefully the Ferrari 488 Speciale. Doubt there'll be a more exciting car launched all year.'



DAVID VIVIAN
Contributing editor

'The next Civic Type R – fascinated to find out if Honda is actually capable of nailing it.'



ADAM TOWLER
Contributing road tester

'If it arrives, I can't wait to drive the new TVR.'



WILL BEAUMONT
Staff writer

'Porsche 991.2 GT3. Naturally aspirated flat-six that'll rev to 9000rpm, plus a manual gearbox, hopefully.'

The Grand Tour

MODERN PERFORMANCE cars can be so fiendishly complicated that it takes time to really understand them. With so many chassis, engine and transmission settings, and even different modes for the steering and so on, you really need to cover serious distances in a car before you can hope to get properly beneath its skin.

Appropriately there's something of a grand touring theme to this month's Driven section, with a handful of cars

that are specifically designed for long – and fast – journeys. We open with a comparison between the new Aston Martin DB11 and the consummate grand touring coupe, the Bentley Continental GT Speed. Given the DB11's enormous importance to Aston Martin, it really must vanquish its rival in this test.

We also drive the drop-top Jaguar F-type SVR Convertible and sample the Bentley Flying Spur V8 S, both cars that should be at their best when covering ground at speed.

Aston Martin DB11 v Bentley Continental GT Speed

With input from Mercedes-AMG, can the new DB11 help Aston Martin seriously challenge the Bentley Continental in the luxury GT market?

Test location: Snake Pass, Derbyshire
GPS: 53.42922, -1.87354

LET'S START WITH THE Bentley. And it starts well. This is a deeply, deeply handsome car, evolved beautifully from Dirk van Braeckel's original of 2003. You approach it, stroke the impossibly even paint, feel the weight of the door and notice the double glazing as you open it. The cabin is magnificent, too. Luxurious, of course, and unmistakably Bentley. The infotainment system, however, is poor in presentation and operation, and has aged badly.

You hear a *woomph* as the engine starts – distant and slightly aloof. Four words, it turns out, that characterise the Bentley as a whole. As you move off, you're instantly aware that the twin-turbo W12 is

a prodigious engine. Brutal even, but with an inherent refinement that encourages you to stretch it to the limit in any gear. This is a wildly fast car; the fastest production car Bentley has ever made, in fact. From a standstill to 100mph takes just nine seconds, while the top speed is 206mph. And the eight-speed ZF automatic transmission, mated to a 40/60-split four-wheel-drive system, makes deploying the W12's 633bhp and 620lb ft of torque a cinch. Everything is easy in the Bentley and feels intentionally so, as if the car is always saying, 'I've got this.'

On the flipside this means that the GT Speed is not particularly expressive. It would rather the driver did not indulge in agitating the tyres beyond the limit. This limit is far higher than you'd imagine – certainly for a car weighing well over two tons – and the stiffer air springs and bushes on this Speed model do indeed yield a little more agility. However, there's little to learn, discover or enjoy on or over the limit – the Continental is





‘Any thoughts that it won’t sound like an Aston V12 are swiftly eradicated’

an even degree of thrust. The bonus is that when you hold a gear and allow the engine to sing, there’s a very real and very visceral rush to the red line. Downsides? Well, the exhaust and intake notes aren’t especially stirring.

Both the hydraulic steering and braking share similar traits. Inputs need to be deliberate, as there’s a reassuring weight to the controls, and while feedback is muted, neither feels completely numb.

So overall the GT Speed is excellent. It is handsome, beautifully made, fast and stable. Hell, it even smells nice. However, you feel that it gives immense ownership rather than driving satisfaction, which in our world means it has left the door wide open for the Aston Martin to charge through and claim the ‘Best GT’ title. The surprise is that the more driver-focused DB11 doesn’t comprehensively trounce the Conti.

Aston Martin’s newest car expresses more athleticism in its appearance than the Bentley. It’s a frisbee rather than a hammer, and looks like it is perpetually racing towards a bullseye. Neat features include the lift-reducing ‘Curlicue’ vent behind each front wheelarch and the ‘virtual spoiler’ at the rear. The latter ducts air through channels that begin at the base of the C-pillars and exit through a slot in the bootlid. According to Aston, this ‘jet’ of air reduces lift.

The DB11 is equally impressive beneath the skin, too, and that’s not something we’ve been able to say about Astons of late. Lift the huge bonnet (the largest single aluminium pressing in the automotive industry) and you’ll find the smallest details neatly arranged. There’s even a



Above: you sit low in the DB11’s plush cabin, which adds to a feeling of connection with the road; behind the switchgear and dials lurks Mercedes tech. **Left:** GT Speed exudes opulence from behind the wheel, although its infotainment system belongs to a bygone era

starkly neutral in its handling habits and demands a driving style that combines pace with smoothness. And this is not without reward; many will enjoy the Bentley’s aura of invincibility and the indomitable way it covers ground.

It certainly makes the Speed a peerless GT. In Comfort mode the ride is optimised, but spirited driving is discouraged by lumpen body movement. Fortunately, three further modes allow you to feel the benefits of the Speed’s lower ride height, 15 per cent increase in front camber angle and stiffer anti-roll bars. As you ramp up through the modes, extraneous slack and wallow are mostly suppressed and body control is improved, yet the ride remains decent. As there’s little or no ride or noise penalty, the stiffest mode – Sport – feels more like it should be called ‘GT+’.

The rest of the Bentley’s dynamic package has a similar aura of refinement and containment. The auto ‘box is excellent, and the long gearshift paddles, knurled on their rear faces, are simply delightful to use. This is a transmission that is satisfying to manipulate – although never, of course, to the same degree as a manual – by riding the torque curve and short-shifting to sustain



Aston Martin DB11 v Bentley Continental GT Speed

diamond-quilted under-bonnet heat shield. In gold.

Perhaps the weakest design element is the 'floating roof' effect. The Aston design team can't be pleased that a Vauxhall (the Astra) and a Hyundai (the i20) carry a similar signature.

The DB11's interior has created a bigger stir than the exterior, mostly a result of the blending of Aston Martin design sensibilities with Mercedes electronics. It's a mostly successful union, although many will mourn the passing of the wider 'waterfall' centre stack motif (I do). The 'brogue' pattern for the seat and roof leather, however, is a stunning feature and the steering-wheel ergonomics are spot-on. You sit lower than in the Bentley, too, which is a very good thing.

The engine starts with a hollow yowl, and any thoughts that it won't sound like a proper Aston

V12 because of its twin turbos are swiftly eradicated. This engine feels more immediate than the Bentley's W12; busier and more feral. Instantly refined, too. However, passers-by will have more of the V12 music than you. From the outside, the DB11 sounds far more race car-like than it does on the inside – we wish a little more of that music reached the driver.

As you move off, the slickly consistent electric steering gives more feedback than the Bentley's. This feel remains throughout the grip spectrum, certainly at sane road speeds. It's only when the front tyres are at the absolute limit of grip that you wish they could be a little more talkative. The rack is perfectly geared, too – quick either side of centre but stable at high speeds. High marks for the steering, then.

The rear axle scores equally highly. The DB11 has a mechanical limited-slip differential and torque

vectoring (via the brakes) and there's a wonderfully organic feel to it. In particular, the rear axle is utterly harmonious with the front. Steering with the front or the rear (or both) always feels natural, and thus you can encourage more movement – and have more slip options to exploit – than in the Bentley.

The DB11's torque vectoring makes itself known, mostly, by resisting understeer at the extremes of front-end grip – levels that I'd wager are at least as high as in the four-wheel-drive Bentley. However, you're unlikely to venture into this territory much on the road, and you're unlikely to take a DB11 on track, so you have to wonder why – other than fad and marketing potential – torque vectoring is fitted at all.

When we drove a DB11 to Tuscany earlier this year (**evo** 226), we benefitted from mostly smooth tarmac. This time it's different. The

UK's roads are getting worse, and the DB11 doesn't cope with them as well as the Bentley. That's not to say the Aston doesn't ride well – it does. But its loping, long-travel feel is far more suited to graceful, smooth progress on undulating or unwrinkled surfaces than the staccato lumps and ridges of British B-roads. The Bentley, you sense, is simply smashing any of these bumps back into the earth.

It's worth noting that the DB11's suspension and powertrain behaviours remain mostly consistent whether you're in GT, Sport or Sport+. The car's baseline is sporty, and only small degrees of added sportiness are introduced. We're told this was intentional; Aston Martin did not want big steps between modes. Some owners – possibly former Bentley drivers – may prefer a little more bandwidth, particularly at the comfort end.

Instead, to find alternative





personalities in the DB11's dynamics you tend to mix 'n' match the powertrain and suspension settings, which are independently selectable. For instance, GT mode on the suspension side and Sport+ for the powertrain makes for an incredibly competent, confidence-inspiring chassis, particularly when the road-surface topography is mixed.

That 600bhp twin-turbo V12 is a gem. Smooth, punchy, responsive – if this is the future of downsizing, we're in. Don't be fooled by the bigger power and torque figures of the Bentley (it has a 33bhp and 104lb ft advantage) – the Aston's lower kerb weight yields a significantly higher power-to-weight ratio.

If there's a fault, we'd prefer to stack a little more torque higher in the rev range, as in mixed conditions you can often feel the rear axle drive into the traction control, but overall Aston's first twin-turbo is a peach.

So now the verdict. After a week in both cars, driving in all conditions and including a wonderful day on the Snake Pass, it's clear that the DB11 is the drivers' choice among big, 12-cylinder GTs. However, the Bentley runs the contest far closer

than you'd expect. The Continental GT Speed's is defined by how it radiates total control. It operates at the highest level, but with plenty in reserve. This aura of confidence rubs off on the driver, and you bond with it as you would your closest and most dependable friend.

But we've all got another friend who we turn to when we want to have a little more fun – and that's the DB11. It can't match the GT Speed's total refinement, or sense of indomitability, but it can return fire with better steering and more expressive handling.

On the engine and performance side, it's a draw, and you'll have to make up your own mind on the styling and interior. So the DB11's victory is down to the fact that when you want to drive it – really drive it – it responds in kind.

Some were expecting a revolution with the DB11; perhaps this was unfair. After all, it's not like Astons of recent years haven't been dynamically at the top of their game. Instead the DB11 benefits from evolution and is, for now, the best GT of its type you can buy. ❌

Nick Trott



Specification

Aston Martin DB11	Engine	Power	Torque	0-62mph	Top speed	Weight	Basic price
	V12, 5204cc, twin-turbo	600bhp @ 6500rpm	516lb ft @ 1500-5000rpm	3.9sec (claimed)	200mph (claimed)	1770kg (344bhp/ton)	£154,900
	+ The world's best luxury sports GT car - Not necessarily the revolution some were expecting						

evo rating ★★★★★

Bentley Continental GT Speed	Engine	Power	Torque	0-62mph	Top speed	Weight	Basic price
	W12, 5998cc, twin-turbo	633bhp @ 5900rpm	620lb ft @ 2000rpm	4.1sec (claimed)	206mph (claimed)	2245kg (286bhp/ton)	£168,900
	+ Perfect when you want to go very fast, very comfortably; surprisingly fleet of foot - Almost <i>too</i> cossetting						

evo rating ★★★★★

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Jaguar F-type SVR Convertible

Proper drop-top supercar or a grotesque caricature that seems a bit confused?

Test location: B660, Cambridgeshire
GPS: 52.401677, -0.373068
Photography: Aston Parrott



T HE JAGUAR F-TYPE SVR Convertible's exhaust system is made of such exotic materials that it almost seems like a shame to blast noxious gases through it. The titanium and Inconel pipework saves 16kg compared with the F-type R's exhaust, which is a very good thing. Jaguar says it emits a 'distinctive rumble', which is a lie.

The serrated, tuneless blare – like a woodpecker digging directly into your skull – that fires from those four exhaust tips is no more a rumble than Eric Pickles' post-vindaloo flatulence is a pitch-perfect aria. From inside the cabin the SVR's soundtrack under full throttle has the offensive, irritating quality of a distant leaf blower or quad-bike engine, with no musicality or variation through the rev range.

That's true when the roof is down, at least, because with the canvas hood – or better still, the Coupe's fixed metal roof – protecting your eardrums from the worst of the din, the SVR's soundtrack can be quite fun, albeit in an unsophisticated, attention-seeking sort of way.

There's also something uncouth about the tacked-on rear wing that's specific to the range-topping SVR models. Again, the spoiler works better on the Coupe, but on this Convertible it looks more like a pram



handle than an aerodynamic device. Thankfully it can be deleted, and the standard deployable rear spoiler installed instead, for no cost.

Aside from the revised bodykit and new exhaust, the SVR also gets a touch more power from its supercharged V8 (567bhp plays the F-type R's 542bhp) and bespoke chassis tuning, too. The modifications to the all-wheel-drive system are detailed rather than comprehensive, though, the result being that it takes a forensic understanding of both versions to identify the handling differences out on the road.

What's immediately apparent, though, is that the SVR is rampantly fast. It accelerates with such force (matching the Coupe to 60mph, at 3.5sec) that your first instinct is to

'The SVR is rather busy across a typical country road. You had better be holding on'

lift back off the throttle pedal, which, incidentally, elicits an immediate and precise response. The eight-speed auto 'box is generally very good, but in terms of shift speed it's outpaced by the latest twin-clutch transmissions.

Dynamically, this is a complicated car to both understand and describe. There's enough agility and grip to carry huge speed, but on a tricky and bumpy road the SVR needs to be wrestled rather than tickled along. The suspension feels stiff over lumps and bumps, particularly at lower speeds, which hints at rock-solid body control, but in reality the body movements during cornering, braking and even under acceleration are very pronounced. The car also hunts ruts and cambers enthusiastically.

There's a slight instability under heavy braking, too. Enough to drag

the steering wheel through your fingers if you're not grasping it firmly. All this means the SVR is rather busy across a typical British country road. You had better be holding on to it.

You should be deliberate with your inputs, too, committing fully to the throttle early and relying on the AWD to deploy the torque rather than hovering over the pedal hesitantly at corner exit. On the approach to a bend you also need to turn in hard enough to make the car sit down heavily in the corner – if you're too timid you won't compress the springs enough to push through the sloppy, slightly woolly initial phase of travel.

Driving the SVR quickly is a bit like learning to parallel turn on skis – you can try to build up to it all you like, but there comes a point where you have to take a small leap of faith and really commit to the turn with confidence.

The trouble, though, is that the massive straight-line performance, aloof yet hyper-responsive steering, exaggerated body movements and the fact that it fidgets over the road surface mean the SVR is not a car that inspires confidence right away. That comes with time – perhaps more time, we'd suggest, than the typical driver will be able to tolerate that infernal soundtrack. ❌

Dan Prosser (@TheDanProsser)

Specification

Engine V8, 5000cc, supercharger	CO2 269g/km	Power 567bhp @ 6500rpm	Torque 516lb ft @ 3500-5000rpm	0-60mph 3.5sec (claimed)	Top speed 195mph (claimed)	Weight 1720kg (335bhp/ton)	Price £115,485
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+ Huge performance, rigid body, drama - Contrived soundtrack, unsettled handling on bumpy roads

evo rating ★★★★★

Caterham Seven Sprint

Retro looks meet modern underpinnings for a celebratory Seven

Test location: Thundridge, Hertfordshire
GPS: 51.839570, -0.051380
Photography: Aston Parrott



I STRUGGLE TO KNOW what to do with my elbows in a Caterham. If I tuck them in front of me, between the transmission tunnel and the side panel, certain gears are impossible to select. Alternatively, if I splay them wide over the side panel and the transmission tunnel, steering becomes tricky. Consequently I frequently change where I point my elbows. Sometimes they're in and other times they're out, but it's impossible to move position without banging an elbow on something. And that's in an ordinary Caterham fitted with a tiny, 260mm steering wheel. Worryingly, to complement a host of other retro embellishments, the new Seven Sprint has a larger, 330mm, wood-rimmed Moto-Lita wheel.

Just 60 Sprints will be built to celebrate 60 years since the launch of the original Lotus Seven. The Sprint sees the return of the traditional flared front wings, so it looks very much like a Series 2 Lotus Seven, an appearance aided by the six traditional '60s British paint colours being offered (this one is Camberwick Green) and the interior's period-style Smiths dials and red leather seats.

Underneath ye olde veneer, however, the Sprint is essentially a

'It makes almost every corner feel like you're at the Goodwood Revival'

modern Caterham Seven 160. That means it's powered by a 660cc, three-cylinder turbocharged Suzuki engine producing 80bhp and 79lb ft of torque. Yet with only 490kg to shift, the Sprint can, er, sprint to 60mph in 6.9sec.

As in the 160, that Suzuki motor feels lethargic, the needle of the rev counter taking an age to creep up to its 7700rpm limit. It also sounds gruff and industrial, and more than a little out of place here when you lift off the throttle and the turbocharger makes itself known with a flutter and chirp. It's like someone infiltrating the set of *Heartbeat* wearing a tracksuit.

The gearbox feels convincingly dated, though, being notchy and so reluctant to engage a gear that it's essential to rev-match when changing



down. Sadly, the lazy engine response means that a quick blip of the throttle as you heel and toe doesn't generate enough revs for a smooth shift.

But the Seven built its reputation on its chassis, right? And it's here where the Sprint starts to shine. Not necessarily in tighter turns, where the limited grip from the narrow rubber has the inside rear tyre spinning excessively (there's no limited-slip differential), but in wider corners there's real fun to be had. With just 80bhp, maintaining pace is vital. Ease off the throttle – you rarely need to brake on the road – and turn in aggressively, feel the back axle roll on its tyres and the grip bleed away. Now add a touch of opposite lock and a fraction of throttle to neutralise the oversteer. Rather than fully correcting the slide, you ride it through to the apex, gradually straightening the wheel until you exit the corner.

Driven thus, the Sprint makes almost every corner feel like you're at the Goodwood Revival, sliding through Woodcote corner, and it's incredibly satisfying when you get it right. It sounds considerably more heroic than it actually is; the Sprint is so small that you have a huge amount of space to play with on the road and you simply aren't travelling very fast. You do need to pick your roads carefully, though. The Sprint is stiffly sprung and the back-end hops and bounces around, limiting the progress you can make on rougher tarmac. Being sat so close to the live rear axle magnifies the pogoing effect for the driver, too.

So the Sprint behaves exactly like the 160. However, that steering wheel does create a problem. With your hands set further apart, so are your elbows, and that makes them even more likely to collide with parts of the interior or your passenger. It seems ludicrous to mark a Caterham down for its ergonomic shortcomings – all Caterhams are horrifically uncomfortable by modern standards – but anything that exacerbates the issue, such as the Sprint's retro steering wheel, makes them less enjoyable to drive. ❌

Will Beaumont
 (@WillBeaumont)

Specification

Engine	CO2	Power	Torque	0-60mph	Top speed	Weight	Price
In-line 3-cyl, 660cc, turbo	n/a	80bhp @ 7000rpm	79lb ft @ 3400rpm	6.9sec (claimed)	100mph (claimed)	490kg (166bhp/ton)	£27,995 (sold out)

+ Progressive, transparent and delicate handling - Big steering wheel restricts interior space even more

evo rating ★★★★★

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VW Golf GTI Clubsport Edition 40

With the brilliant Clubsport S sold out, is this the best Golf GTI that money can buy?

Test location: Thundridge, Hertfordshire
GPS: 51.839570, -0.051380
Photography: Aston Parrott



AFTER THE EUPHORIA OF the Golf GTI Clubsport S scoring a victory in issue 227's hyperhatch group test and then going on to bloody a number of premium noses in last month's eCoty, it may have escaped your mind that VW produces two Golf GTIs with 'Clubsport' in their names. This is the one you can still buy, and this is our first drive of it on the road.

It's available as a three- or five-door and with a choice of either a six-speed manual or double-clutch gearbox. There's an electronically controlled mechanical limited-slip differential taken straight from the GTI Performance Pack model, too.

Using the familiar EA888 2-litre turbo engine from other GTI models and the R, the Clubsport produces 261bhp – 34bhp more than a Performance Pack GTI – and in short bursts that increases to 286bhp, just 10bhp shy of the R's peak figure and 20bhp below the Clubsport S's. Peak torque is 258lb ft at 1700-5300rpm with 280lb ft on overboost, but at 6.3sec to 62mph regardless of which gearbox you choose, the Edition 40 is some way short of the 5.2sec **evo** recorded with its Fast Fleet Golf R.

Other changes will be familiar to those of you who have pored



'You can really feel the rear axle arc round the apex as you drive for the exit'

over the spec of a Clubsport S. The front bumper features a number of aerodynamic devices that give the car a more focused look. I'd posit that it looks more extreme even than Ford's Focus RS, but then I am to design what Nigel Farage is to international diplomacy. There's also a boot spoiler and the most modest of rear diffusers, which permits VW to claim that rear-axle downforce

is 'significant' above 60mph. It also claims 'slight' downforce at the front axle. The car does, however, create no lift, which is something.

Other chassis work has seen the roll stiffness move rearwards to improve rear-axle turn-in and front-end grip. In essence, this means understeer should be less prevalent and the rear more mobile.

Spring rates are ten per cent stiffer, with the dampers tweaked to suit, but toe, camber and caster settings remain untouched from a GTI Performance Pack (so, too, the brakes). Adjustable dampers, as fitted to this car, are an £830 option.

An 18-inch wheel is standard and comes fitted with a Pirelli P Zero tyre, but you can specify the same 19-inch wheel and ferociously sticky (in the dry, at least) Michelin Pilot Sport Cup 2 tyre as on the Clubsport S.

As VW prepares for the new, facelifted Mk7 Golf (see page 19), the Clubsport feels like the engineers have been let loose to do what they wish, resulting in this GTI feeling tighter, fitter, more eager and athletic than the Mk7 GTIs that have gone before. The chassis doesn't represent a night-and-day difference over a regular GTI's, but it's appreciably more responsive and alert when you push it,

the differential being keen to bite and the front axle less inclined to push when you pour on the power. Indeed, the chassis manages to extract more grip and traction from the (standard) front tyres than before, allowing for wider throttle openings earlier in corners and no manic scrabble for grip from the inside front tyre.

At higher speeds the Clubsport is much sharper, too, with less body roll. The front and rear feel more tightly connected and react as one when the car is pitched in on its nose – you can really feel the rear arc round the apex as you drive for the exit. Who needs a four-wheel-drive hatch?

The added power will be noticeable to anyone coming out of a regular GTI, and on the road the Clubsport feels on a par with an R in a straight line. Its motor exhibits a bit more of an appetite for revs and encourages you to reach for the top end of the tacho rather than driving around without straying from the torque band. This is a deceptively quick hot hatch.

Renault's Mégane 275 Trophy and Honda's Civic Type R still have sharper chassis, but in the Clubsport Edition 40, VW has delivered the best drivers' GTI you can buy. If you're quick. **X**

Stuart Gallagher
 (@stuartg917)

Specification

Engine	CO2
In-line 4-cyl, 1984cc, turbo	162g/km

Power	Torque	0-62mph	Top speed
286bhp @ 5350-6600rpm	280b ft @ 1700-5300rpm	6.3sec (claimed)	155mph (limited)

evo rating ★★★★★	Weight	Price
	1300kg (224bhp/ton)	£30,935

+ Faster, tighter, fitter engine and chassis **■** Still not top of the class; only in production for a short time

Vauxhall Maloo VXR8 LSA

The brute ute's swansong proves riotously entertaining and exceptionally able

Test location: Silverstone, Northants

GPS: 52.07861, -1.01694

Photography: Jakob Ebrey



WITHIN ABOUT, OH, ten yards of driving this Maloo you find yourself laughing at the absurdity of piloting a supercharged V8 Aussie ute on British roads. The car, and the feelings it elicits, are nothing short of riotous.

Then you drive more miles, you scratch the surface a little more, you carry out more (manual) gearchanges and you sift through the driver modes. Hell, you might even take it on a trackday at the full Silverstone Grand Prix circuit like we did. Then, then you will be shocked. Why? Because underneath the exaggerated ridiculousness of the Vauxhall VXR8 Maloo LSA you'll find a damned good drivers' car. Seriously.

But let's rewind. This is the end of the road for the Holden Maloo – a pickup that's been in production since 1990. If you balk at the asking price, perhaps remembering this version's significance as one of the last of a line will go some way towards justifying the figure. That and the fact you can buy it as a commercial vehicle and reclaim the VAT...

The VXR8 Maloo LSA has quite a bit more power than the outgoing model. It's up from 425bhp to 537bhp, with torque rising from 420lb ft to 495lb ft, thanks to what is



'The noise, response and even the vibration have a texture to them that make every rev a joy to experience'

essentially the same engine fitted to the Camaro ZL1. It features an Eaton four-lobe supercharger, water-to-air chargecooling and a high-flow exhaust system.

This is a joyous engine. The noise, response and even the vibration have a texture to them that make every rev a delight to experience. With big cubes, and a supercharger at work, it blends torque into horsepower and throws in an afterburner for good measure. This VXR8 positively rips towards the red line. And fuel consumption? Yes. Lots of it.

The increase in power has necessitated modifications to the Maloo's chassis. The springs and dampers have been stiffened, with reduced body roll, improved turn-in and greater stability under braking the stated aims. Oh, and here's an important point: this is no clumsy truck. It has MacPherson struts and an anti-roll bar at the front, and fully independent multi-link rear suspension. There's also a proper limited-slip differential, electronic stability control, launch control (for the manual) and three driver modes (Comfort, Sport, and Performance).

Sure it's big, but there's a gristly connection with the road surface that allows you to place the Maloo

with precision. Everything feels organic, rather than ancient, and despite its size you always feel ready to indulge. Of course, with so little weight over the rear and so much power, the potential for oversteer is huge. However, it gives you understeer first, safely cautioning that you've exceeded grip levels, then falls into graceful oversteer should you drive through it. It does this nicely in Performance mode too – allowing you to trim your line and slither safely out of junctions at sane road speeds. I can't emphasise this point enough. The Maloo makes you laugh when stationary, and then at every increment all the way to top speed.

If it sounds like you're reading about a five-star car, you're right. I've wrestled with this rating for a few days and every fibre of my being says it's a five-star car – not just for what it represents (an admirable collective lunacy from the Aussies for building it and Vauxhall for importing it), but also for its objective excellence. Is it as good as other five-star cars such as a 911 GT3 RS or a Ferrari 458 Speciale? No. Of course not. But is it as much fun? Absolutely. So there you have it. Five stars. Bloody well done Holden and Vauxhall. ☒

Nick Trott

Specification

Engine	CO2	Power	Torque	0-60mph	Top speed	Weight	Price
V8, 6162cc, supercharged	363g/km	537bhp @ 6150rpm	495lb ft @ 4200rpm	4.5sec (claimed)	155mph (claimed)	1870kg (292bhp/ton)	£54,520

+ Rampant urge and surprising all-round excellence **■** Raging thirst

evo rating

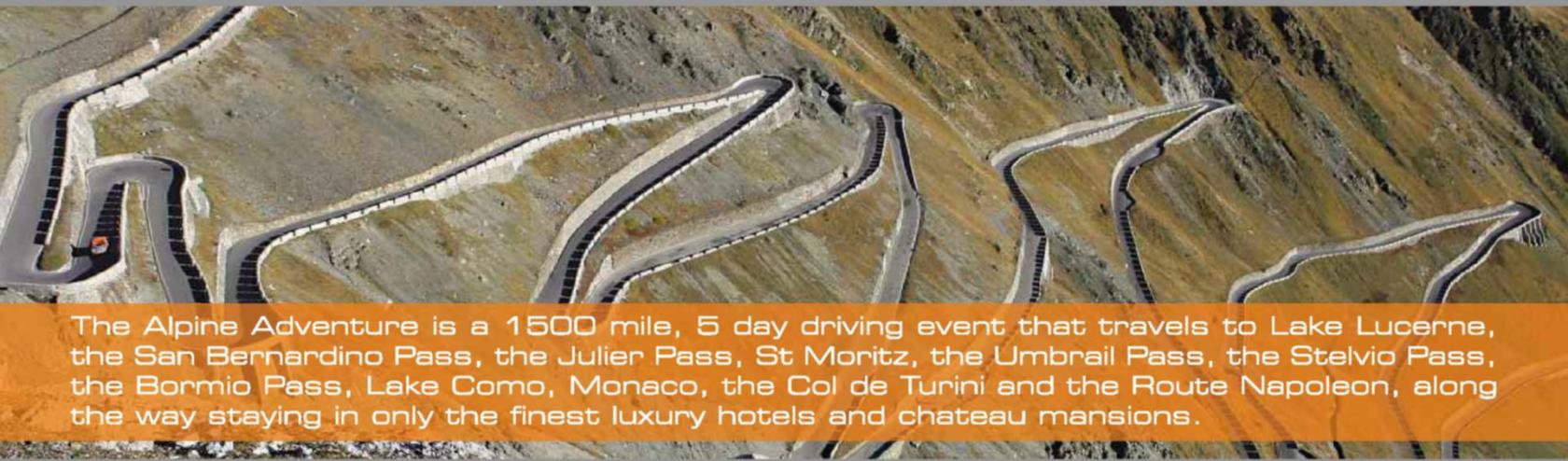




Alpine Adventure

Fri 16 - Tue 20 June, 2017

£2250 until 1/1/17
normal price £2500



The Alpine Adventure is a 1500 mile, 5 day driving event that travels to Lake Lucerne, the San Bernardino Pass, the Julier Pass, St Moritz, the Umbrail Pass, the Stelvio Pass, the Bormio Pass, Lake Como, Monaco, the Col de Turini and the Route Napoleon, along the way staying in only the finest luxury hotels and chateau mansions.



California Run

Sat 16 - Sat 23 Sept, 2017

£5500 until 1/1/17
normal price £6000



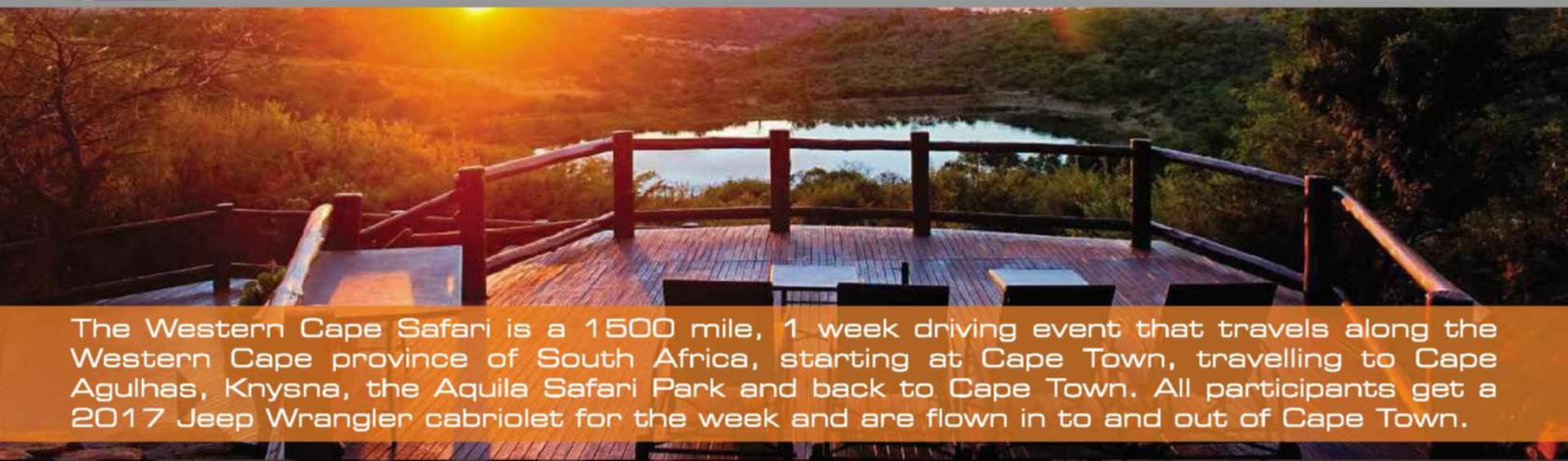
The California Run is a 1500 mile, 1 week driving event starting in Los Angeles, travelling to Las Vegas, Death Valley, Mount Whitney, the Sierra Nevada Mountains, the Yosemite National Park, San Francisco then finally down the Pacific Coast Highway back to Los Angeles. All participants get a 2017 Ford Mustang cabriolet for the week and are flown in to and out of LA.



Western Cape
Safari

Sat 02 - Sat 09 Dec, 2017

£5500 until 1/1/17
normal price £6000



The Western Cape Safari is a 1500 mile, 1 week driving event that travels along the Western Cape province of South Africa, starting at Cape Town, travelling to Cape Agulhas, Knysna, the Aquila Safari Park and back to Cape Town. All participants get a 2017 Jeep Wrangler cabriolet for the week and are flown in to and out of Cape Town.

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Bentley Flying Spur V8 S

Big saloon's imperfections can be excused by the sense of occasion it offers

Test location: Cockfield, Suffolk
GPS: 52.154194, 0.785216
Photography: Dean Smith



TWO THOUSAND, THREE hundred and forty-two. Written out it doesn't look like a big number. But 2342kg written numerically, and when seen on the technical specification for Bentley's new Flying Spur V8 S, is hard to ignore. As the cliché goes: Bentleys are the world's fastest trucks...

The S in this Flying Spur's name refers to the company's more sporting package that focuses on performance, agility and luxury, and it follows the same strategy employed on the two-door Continental GT.

Performance is dealt with by increasing the output of the 4-litre twin-turbocharged V8, which undergoes the gentlest of massages to produce 521bhp (a 21bhp increase over the regular V8 Flying Spur) and 502lb ft of torque (an uplift of 15lb ft). The result is three-tenths shaved from the 0-60mph time, which now takes 4.6sec on the way to a top speed of 190mph (up 7mph).

Making nigh-on 2.5 tons of British and German craftsmanship feel agile is something Bentley invests a great deal in (see *evo* 229 for our insight into how the firm develops its cars' dynamics) and the S is no different. As with the Continental GT V8 S the dampers are stiffer, but here



'It can still justify its place on the list of chairman-of-the-board contenders'

they're even more so, while retaining a modicum of the ride comfort one would expect from a Bentley. You can go further in the dynamics department by replacing the standard cast-iron brakes with 420mm front and 405mm rear carbon-ceramics to reduce unsprung mass by 20 per cent and up the £142,800 price tag by a further £10,825.

Finally there is the luxury component of the S, and few car makers do luxury with quite the aplomb of Bentley. Its production systems may well have changed under Volkswagen ownership, yet every Bentley remains hand-finished and the lavishness of the materials used inside is superlative. One caveat is that the VW Phaeton-sourced infotainment system is shockingly bad to look at and use, yet it doesn't detract from the overall splendour of travelling by Bentley. It remains touch and go as to whether it's better to sit in the back or up front.

One of the Flying Spur's biggest challenges is that its rivals do so much of what it does so much better. Mercedes' S65 and Audi's S8 are as quick and their performance is more accessible because they're nimbler and faster reacting cars.

The Flying Spur feels a bit old-school when it comes to flinging it down an enjoyable road: the steering is woolly, the throttle response is slow on the uptake no matter what setting you put the eight-speed gearbox in. Meanwhile, the S-class matches the Bentley for refinement and the Audi has the Crewe machine beaten for overall quality (although the Bentley has the better wood...).

Both Germans are light years ahead on the technology front, and BMW's carbon-core chassis'd 7-series is more advanced still.

Now in its 11th year of production, the Flying Spur can still justify its place on the list of chairman-of-the-board contenders. But only just. Unlike its mainstream rivals, the Flying Spur has presence, and along with that it cocoons you from the outside world and immerses you in total opulence that the others can't match. Where it falls woefully short in areas such as technology, it makes up for by raising a smile every time that V8 stirs into life.

There's no gruff-sounding engine note or exhaust blare (a sports exhaust is conspicuous by its absence from the options list), but instead an evocative growl and a bellow as the tacho heads into the red and the nose gently rises as the thrust builds. As uncompetitive as it is in many modern areas of comparison, it's untouchable in more traditional ways.

The Flying Spur V8 S has its flaws, then, but it also has its place on the road. And those roads would be a duller place without it. **X**

Stuart Gallagher
 (@stuartg917)

Specification

Engine	CO2	Power	Torque	0-60mph	Top speed	Weight	Price
V8, 3993cc, twin-turbo	254g/km	521bhp @ 6000rpm	502lb ft @ 1700rpm	4.6sec (claimed)	190mph (claimed)	2342kg (226bhp/ton)	£142,800

+ Old-school approach to comfort and luxury **-** Old-school tech

evo rating





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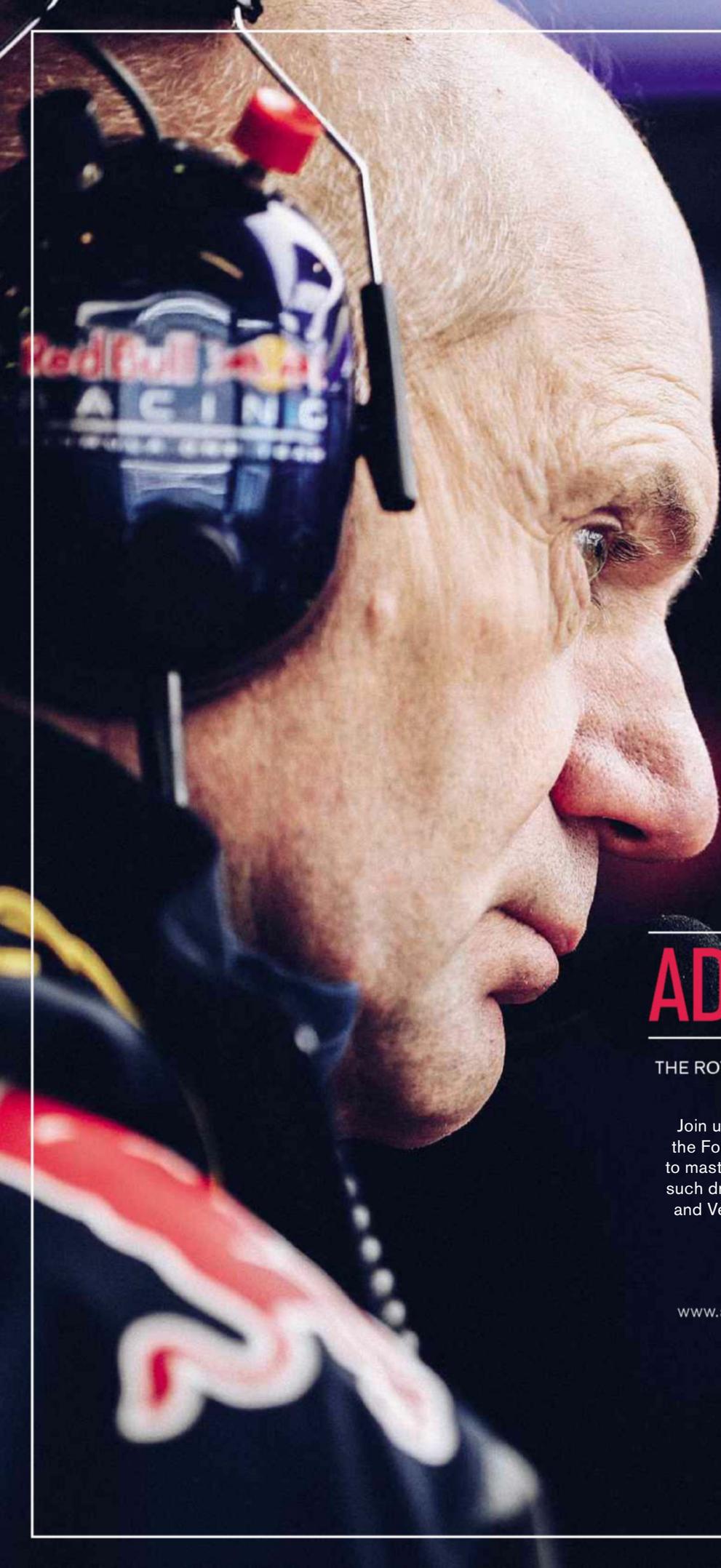
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Outside Line

RICHARD MEADEN



Without Audi, the future for LMP1 looks a little shaky, but Meaden has an intriguing proposal for a replacement class



SO AUDI HAS ANNOUNCED ITS withdrawal from the World Endurance Championship, and with it the Le Mans 24 Hours race, after a remarkable period of record-breaking success. Apart from leaving a multinational army of media bladders devastated at the prospect of not having their annual free berth in the huge temporary 'Audi Race Hotel' erected at La Sarthe next June, what does it all mean?

Sadly it means an end, or at least an abatement, to the incredible LMP1 arms race that has seen Audi go toe-to-toe with in-house rival Porsche and Japanese enduro stalwarts Toyota. The cars, the racing and the intensity of competition has been breathtaking, pushing technology, teams and drivers to the absolute limit.

Can the LMP1 class survive the loss of Audi? In the short term, yes, of course it can. The pointy end of the grid may be depleted, but there's a compelling purity about two giants of endurance racing going head-to-head. Porsche and Toyota will certainly waste no time, effort or budget to capitalise on Audi's absence. Whether this scenario is tenable beyond 2017 is less certain, especially as the leading independent LMP1 entrant, well-respected Swiss-backed, UK-based Rebellion Racing, is stepping down to the LMP2 class next season. It's hard to see another manufacturer stepping up to the plate any time soon.

Better, I reckon, to let LMP1 go out on a high before making a radical shake-up of the regulations that throws the top class of endurance racing open to race-prepared versions of today's hypercars. Think of it as a return to the GT1 and GT2 era. One that gave us cars we now revere for being the last of the road racers, and one that could be funded by some of the many very wealthy enthusiasts who are currently serial hypercar buyers.

It's not without precedent. Back in the '90s, privateer racer Ray Bellm persuaded McLaren to make a race car out of its then-new F1 supercar – a challenge that F1 designer Gordon Murray never had in mind for the world's fastest and most cleverly packaged road car. Bellm's success would not only go

on to cement the F1's place in history, but it would spark one of the most evocative and iconic eras of endurance racing in living memory. Of course, GT1 eventually got out of hand with manufacturers turning the system on its head, designing race cars that were then made in tiny numbers for the road to satisfy the regulations. Still, the fact these unicorns were mutations of cars that wore licence plates made them truly special.

Apply the same philosophy to today's hypercars, with race-tuned versions run by privateer teams, and you'd have a truly epic recipe for extreme, diverse and, best of all, road-legal endurance racers. Imagine a category that pitched the McLaren

P1 GTR against a similarly amped-up LaFerrari (a GTO, perhaps?) and Porsche 918 Spyder. Perhaps with the odd Aston Martin Vulcan and Koenigsegg One:1 in the mix for good measure. Jaguar could take the C-X75 out of mothballs and start a limited production run. And what about Aston and AMG going at it with the AM-RB 001 and F1-engined 'R50'?

The spectacle would be off the scale, the likelihood of big grids much higher than with LMP1, and it would add credibility and validation to a breed of car that presently leads a rather vacuous existence.

Could it happen? Absolutely. Especially as the ACO (the organising body for the Le Mans 24 Hours race) has a history of

unilateral decisions. Will it happen? Probably not. But that shouldn't stop us dreaming.

It seems cruel that the VW Group's dieselgate debacle should rob us of Audi's WEC campaign (belt-tightening to offset the costs that have resulted from the scandal are rumoured to be the cause of recent changes in the group's motorsport activities). The bitter irony is that for years Audi Sport Joest's R8, R10, R12 and R18 LMP1 cars were the ultimate defeat devices, crushing their opposition with monotonous regularity, season after season after season. On two occasions I've been fortunate to experience the cars and meet the people that made Audi such a force to be reckoned with at Le Mans. It makes me sad that the world of endurance racing has lost such an extraordinary competitor and innovator. ❧

'Imagine a category that pitched the McLaren P1 GTR against a similarly amped-up LaFerrari and 918 Spyder'

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- F10 530D » 305 BHP
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- 316D/216D/116D » 160 BHP
- 318D/218D/118D » 225 BHP
- 330D E90 » 296+ BHP
- 320D E90 » 215 BHP
- 420i/320i/220i/120i » 275+ BHP
- 435i/ F30 335i » 390 BHP
- 428i/328i » 295 BHP
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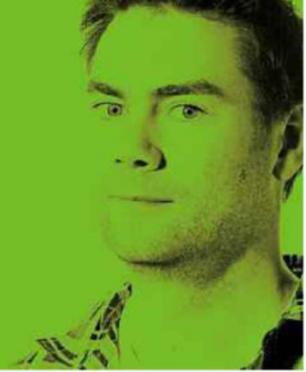


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RICHARD PORTER



It may not be the quickest north-south route, but its ability to surprise, entertain and even disgust makes the A1 the natural choice, says Porter



A FEW WEEKS AGO I HAD TO GET TO

North Yorkshire. There's an obvious way to do this from my place in north London and it's up the M1. Even with 50mph limits through multiple roadworks, the M1 would be the fastest way. All motorways have places in which they clip along. Almost all of the M40 clips along. Almost none of the M4 does. And, once you get past the average speed cameras and the coagulation of south-eastern England, the M1 gets a trot on and before you know it, you're in Leeds.

The alternative to the M1 for a London to Nyorks dash is the A1. And on paper, that's not much of an alternative at all. It's hard to think of a British road as strange and as variable as the A1. At some points it's a single-lane sluggard, oozing through grimy bits of London, at other times it's an eight-lane superhighway thundering across the flatlands of Cambridgeshire. One minute it's broad and straight, the next it's doing a mad impression of Cadwell Park as it snakes in symphony with the topography of north Bedfordshire. Sometimes it lets you hammer down with giddy abandon, other times it springs a Gatso or average speed zone upon you with almost no warning. At times it's spookily free of traffic, at others it's thick with cars and dumb tanker drivers attempting to overtake another lorry just as you reach an eight-mile uphill climb. The A1 is consistently confusing and confusingly inconsistent. It conjures roundabouts out of nowhere then changes its mind and doesn't present you with one for ages. It swoops and sweeps then flattens and flies, it widens and narrows, it roars and then crawls.

Just stopping for petrol and a pee on the A1 is a strange experience. Sometimes you might encounter a slick, overlit service area of the modern kind. Other times you might find yourself at the kind of paint peeling, oil-stained, one-horse desolation station behind which you'd half expect to discover a dead body. Not the sort of place you'd want to order a coffee, but a very handy stop off if you want to browse a world-class collection of pornographic magazines.

Mind you, if that's your bag don't be too hasty my friends,

because the A1 is also home to an inexplicable number of sex shops and creepy swingers' shacks, the kind of places that immediately bring to mind the word 'sticky'. There's no ready explanation for why the femoral artery of eastern England is so thick with bongo shops when no other trunk route in Britain is so blessed with chances to buy a dildo or a quick fumble with someone else's wife. But this, in its own weird and slightly creepy way, is one of many things that make the A1 great.

Yes, it probably is slower than the M1. Yes, it's strange and occasionally frustrating. But it's also brilliant and quirky and it gives you things to look at. There are no smut stops on the M1, nor

is there, at its northern fringe, a scrapyard with old fighter jets in it. There's really very little to see from the M1 at all, unless you count a massive Amazon warehouse and that sign for the inexplicable British space centre. Whereas the A1 throws up all of British life, from agriculture and industry to that cluster of slightly sad looking car dealers just near Sandy. And further up there's an MGF specialist, which is dangerous because it always makes me briefly think about buying an MGF. Plus you can take your chances at one of the many petrol stations, some of which seem to be several miles from the sign at the exit that leads you to them, and you never know what other delights might await you. Maybe they'll have hot home-made

pies on the counter. Maybe you'll get left for dead behind the tyre inflation machine. Or chopped up and made into pies. These are the random delights of Britain's most random road.

There's one more thing about the A1. It gives you something to do. With its wildly varying configurations and limitations and its occasional habit of lobbing a roundabout into the mix, there's regularly something to busy the mind and occupy the hands when you travel up the A1, and if you like driving that's got to be preferable to the brain-out trudge up the drearily consistent M1.

It's bizarre and unpredictable and almost certainly slower, but the A1 is also interesting and unusual and I hope it never changes. Because although you're faced with a choice when driving from London to North Yorkshire, as far as I'm concerned there really is no choice at all. ❧

'You might find yourself at the kind of one-horse desolation station behind which you'd half expect to discover a dead body'

Merry Christmas



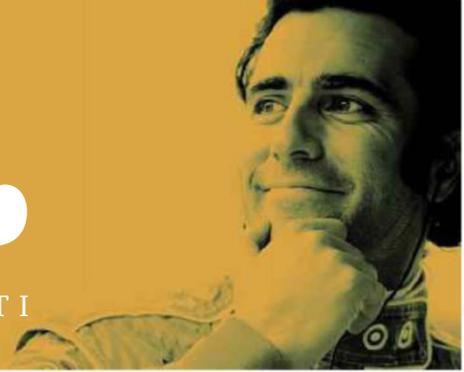
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Max Verstappen is exhibiting the hallmarks of a world champion, but Dario wonders whether the teenage F1 star is walking a tightrope

D

DID YOU SEE MAX VERSTAPPEN'S MOVE

on Hamilton at Suzuka? It wasn't a move to get me shouting at the TV but it was dangerous nonetheless. Cold, too – a premeditated slamming of the door after waiting for Lewis to commit hard on the brakes. The cars carry 190mph through 130R then shed three quarters of that to make the first apex of the final chicane, so Hamilton had to make a dramatic dive down the escape road to avoid a collision.

It's for precisely this sort of display that young Verstappen now has a reputation for militant driving. And as many of you will know, the FIA has even introduced a rule outlawing this style of defence: any protection of track position resulting in a driver having to take 'evasive action' will be deemed dangerous. It's left me wondering whether this is meddling with a series that really doesn't need more micromanagement or if it's a very necessary precaution. I'm on the fence but inclined to agree with Toto Wolff's analysis of Verstappen as 'refreshing but dangerous'.

The issue of safety arises because in order to overtake someone on the brakes, you have to brake *later* than them. Sounds obvious. What it really means is that you have to outbrake a car that is already on the limit. So as the following car you commit to a line based on the position of the guy in front, and if that car changes its trajectory, well, you're on a sticky wicket.

Verstappen very well knows this and so has no excuse. If you're talented enough to execute a defensive shimmy and still kiss that apex, all while coping with 5 G of braking, then you're smart enough to know that it's also unacceptably dangerous. F1 requires a level of commitment but it's no place to let single-mindedness obscure the big picture. This sentiment will carry greater pertinence next season, when speeds should take a noticeable hike and the exposed tyres that act as a lethal springboard for single-seaters get even broader.

More dangerous still was what Verstappen did to Räikkönen at Spa, jinking and dummyming frenetically to block the Ferrari when the two cars were flat-out down the Kimmels straight. This could have resulted in an aircraft crash! Kimi's reactions and deft touch at

the wheel saved them both, particularly as his car would have been massively unstable with its rear wing in low-drag configuration. Waiting in the middle of the track to block either left or right, or both, once your rival has committed, all while speeding along at more than 200mph? Foolish. In Max's defence the closing rate would have been huge because of the DRS, but again, a driver of his talent in his second F1 season will know exactly what to expect in this regard. He took it too far. And before anybody cries 'anti-racing', I'll say that the differences on this matter are subtle. Max's tactics aren't much more dangerous than what anybody else is doing, but they are still dangerous. Come back to me when two cars touch wheels and end up in the grandstand. I've been there – it's not a fun place to be.

We've seen this before, mind. Jack Brabham was ferociously difficult to pass, but back then there was etiquette between drivers born of the reality that tangling could easily be fatal. Jackie Stewart hinted as much when he said that Brabham never seemed to block intentionally. That changed with Senna, who was another who weaved around but took hostile racecraft to the next level, something that was regularly criticised before he died. Schumacher's tactics, meanwhile, were tantamount to warfare, and both the German and the Brazilian were so passionate about winning that they almost put other drivers into the pit wall (notably Prost at Estoril in

'88 and Barichello at Interlagos in 2010, respectively). Max fits this mould: great to watch, explosively fast, and on occasion exhibiting questionable sporting ethics. I was no saint and in the heat of battle pushed the limits but, like most others, not to the extent that Max does. In pressuring the man to change are we demanding that a leopard change its spots?

The answer is we don't yet know. Verstappen has come up to F1 from F3 so quickly it beggars belief. He won his maiden Grand Prix earlier this year, aged 18, and before the gearbox failure in Austin was level in the championship with his superstar teammate, Daniel Ricciardo. He probes the edges of the F1 rulebook in the same way many of the greats have, and if he keeps that mentality but calms down a little I think he'll join them in due course. I'm a huge fan. Right now, though, he's just a fraction too far over the line. ❧

'Max fits the mould – great to watch, explosively fast, and on occasion exhibiting questionable sporting ethics'

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Audi claims its latest TT RS is a serious contender, Porsche that its new four-cylinder 718 Cayman S is still the pick of its class, while BMW's M2 has all the ingredients to be the best £50k sports coupe of all. So which wins the fight?

G R E A T



EXPECTATIONS

PHOTOGRAPHY *by* DEAN SMITH



TT RS v 718 CAYMAN S v M2





On road

NORTH YORK MOORS

by ADAM TOWLER

THE LITTLE ORANGE PORSCHE'S

flat-four thumps coarsely at idle from just behind my kidneys. For once, I am oblivious to it. I am completely transfixed by an Audi TT seemingly heading for a massive accident. Up ahead, road test editor Dan Prosser is getting the new TT RS out of shape for Dean Smith's camera on the far hairpin of Bedford Autodrome's West Circuit. The TT dives aggressively into the corner then pitches nose up as Dan gets committed with the throttle, markedly gaining speed in the process. Suddenly the tail yaws to the side, by perhaps 25 degrees but no more, and then it stays locked onto that drift angle, still gaining speed, the front wheels almost straight, the rears spinning up, engine howling. However, there is no accident: this is just what the new TT RS does under power. Already I get the distinct feeling it may be a TT unlike any other.

Right. Focus. There's a 718 Cayman S to be driven, and while slippery conditions mean we've decided to abandon going for lap times today, the session reminds us all why Porsche's mid-engined coupe is a wondrous thing. It's so agile and delicate, and when specced with a limited-slip diff, as it is here, the Autodrome's greasy surface is an unintimidating giggle. If you've got around £50,000 to spend on a new sports coupe that requires no compromise in daily use, the Cayman S surely remains the default choice.

Or does it? Two contenders suggest otherwise, so over the next three days we intend to really drill down into what each of our trio offers. After slithering around the Autodrome, we'll head to the North York Moors for a day, stop off at Blyton Park for another attempt at some lap times (pray for dry tarmac), then visit Bruntingthorpe to gather some straight-line data. By the end of it we should know if four, five or six cylinders is the magic number.

WHEN WE FINALLY LEAVE THE

Bedford Autodrome it's freezing cold and dark, and the prospect of being on the North York Moors before our hostelry's kitchen closes for the night

seems of utmost importance. Writer's privilege means I get the pick of the cars, and out of curiosity I elect for the newcomer.

I'm soon gazing longingly at the glowing tail lamps of the third car here – a BMW M2 – because I just can't get comfortable in the TT RS. Given that our limbs come in all shapes and sizes, this may not apply to you, but Dan will later admit to the same problem: the flat-bottomed wheel doesn't extend near enough to the driver, so to avoid stretching I'm sitting too near to the pedals, and my right leg and hip are soon singing away merrily.

You'd hope for much better from a car that costs £51,800. That's a lot of money for what aesthetically appears to be little more than a TT with a more elaborate – some might say too elaborate – bodykit. This particular, highly specced example costs £68,830, making it the most expensive here. That's an Audi TT, note, for nearly seventy thousand pounds.

What you're really paying for is the engine. The TT RS is all about its in-line five, now more potent at 394bhp and 354lb ft, and lighter by 26kg (with a further 2kg saved in the seven-speed S-tronic dual-clutch transmission – the only choice of 'box). Overall the car weighs 1440kg. You're also getting a very serious set of brakes, with 370mm discs on the front axle and eight-pot calipers. With their stainless steel pins adjoining disc to hub, they look extraordinary, and promise considerable endurance.

It's soon apparent that the Audi's steering is curiously inert in its default setting, with very little self-centring action, but it feels much more accurate in Dynamic, which bodes well for

tomorrow – once we've fiddled around with the Individual settings. Our car runs on optional 20-inch rims, their oversize nature in relation to the body giving the car the lofty, almost cartoon-like appearance of a Hot Wheels toy. Without the optional Magnetic Ride suspension the ride quality would no doubt be challenging, but in Comfort or Auto the variable dampers do just enough to take the edge off the worst of the intrusions. Nevertheless, the TT RS rolls along with a constant aura of pent-up tautness, like a coffee addict queuing for their first espresso of the morning. It's a sensation thrown into sharp relief by the far more relaxed Porsche.

The 718 Cayman S is cheaper in basic form – £48,834 – but suffers the same dramatic inflation here with options, taking it to £67,656. But where the Audi's extras seem largely trivial in the main – £650 on a gloss-carbon engine cover? – the Porsche's are largely about go, not show. Amongst a long list, this Lava Orange car has the 20mm-lower sports suspension with PASM (£1133), torque vectoring and a mechanical limited-slip differential (£890), PCCB ceramic brakes (£4977) and a sports exhaust (£1328 – a questionable expenditure, as we shall see). It's either extra money more fruitfully spent or highlights the traditional stinginess of Porsche's standard equipment list.

The little four-cylinder engine benefits from the same sort of variable-vane turbocharger tech as the 911 Turbo and makes 345bhp and 310lb ft from its 2.5 litres. At 1355kg it's usefully the lightest car here and shares nothing with any more humble platform. Somewhere behind us in the murk the Cayman's driver



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is also complaining about its expensive fixed-back bucket seats, but I know from previous experience that without them it's a surprisingly habitable machine over long distances.

If nothing else, the BMW M2 is a comparative bargain, starting at £44,080 and matching here the Audi's basic price at £51,800 thanks to some more sensible options, including £2645 spent on a seven-speed M DCT 'box. Personally, I was desperate for BMW to send us a manual (as Porsche did), but a twin-clutch makes for an appropriate foe for the Audi. With 365bhp and up to 369lb ft on overboost, the M2 needs all the torque it can muster given it's also the heaviest at a disappointing 1520kg, despite its diminutive dimensions. Oh, and yes, the kitchen has closed when we eventually arrive.

THE NEXT MORNING I AWAKE EARLY to the sound of rain thrashing incessantly against our inn's window. Audi conditions. The TTRS starts with a smirk-inducing *ka-boom* and then gurgles with a note so thick it gnaws at your ears like the wintry air. To be fair, the BMW

isn't far behind for cold-start theatre, with a rich growl of its own, but the Porsche... Well, the 718 just chugs with a tone somewhere between an unsilenced air-cooled Beetle and a Hawkeye-onwards Impreza Turbo.

There's a typically foolproof quality to the TT in these conditions that positions it as a different proposition to the other two. You can feel it continually losing grip at each corner, but what slippage there is remains fleeting, and peeling back a layer of ESP protection sees the Audi's acceleration unaffected by any loss of traction or electronic nursing.

And what acceleration it is. The motor is outrageously muscular, with that deep-chested rumble rising dramatically to a fraught, near-hysterical bark so characteristic of a heavily boosted five-pot. Overtaking is ludicrously easy; it's a gap-commit-growl-gone process, time after time. All it needs is an overlaid scream of pace notes from Christian Geistdörfer to complete a thoroughly authentic Group B soundtrack.

I've driven the M2 before and I know what to expect, but that doesn't stop me aching to drive it

'I KNOW WHAT TO EXPECT OF THE M2, BUT THAT DOESN'T STOP ME ACHING TO DRIVE IT EVERY TIME I CATCH SIGHT OF IT'



every time I catch sight of it. It has the truncated dimensions and the bluff but overpowered-for-its-size look of a harbour master's tugboat.

Proceedings in M-land begin promisingly, for it sounds keen and gruff in an insistently aggressive fashion. I glimpse the bulging rear arches in the mirrors, wriggle that bit more snugly into the supportive driver's seat and pitch into the first, long, sweeping curve. Yet within moments, the M2 proposition begins to unravel with all the depressing familiarity of other recent BMW M-department products.

This needs careful context. If you regularly have the use of a racing circuit all to yourself and an unlimited supply of new tyres, you will love the M2. We adored it at the Bedford Autodrome because it's brilliant at playing the hooligan.

In fact, I concede that an M2 on warm, smooth roads is probably very effective indeed, and if you're the sort of driver who has infinite faith in a car's ability to turn in come what may, you may also fall for its charms. But here's the rub: on a textured stretch of tarmac, in poor weather, the M2's talents do not necessarily

translate. That typically fat, squidgy M steering wheel does its best to dampen the negligible feedback from the front axle. Turn in and the weighting never changes, so there's nothing to reassure you the nose is sticking. And like its bigger brothers, the M2 does get uncomfortably lively at the rear.

That infernal rear axle is always on the move, constantly squirming for grip, shuddering around. These fast moorland roads are characterised by their varying amplitude as well as their direction changes, and the M2 hates them, picking up one or both rear wheels over every crest, sometimes snatching violently one way or the other. It's a phenomenon constantly needed by the powertrain. The straight-six boosts early and with real ferocity, and the M DCT 'box loves to bang in the next gear harshly when changing at high revs and full throttle.

The secret is to transfer weight to the rear via the throttle as soon as possible, shortening the turn-in phase of a corner, because as soon as you're back on the gas the M2 feels a lot more settled and the steering isn't an issue. The

dampers soon get switched back from Sport to Normal – they're far too stiff for these roads, and even in Comfort the M2 can pogo – but I still long for the engine to have more energy higher up the rev band and to not make a monotone *grrrr* whatever it's doing...

After the M2, the Audi is a revelation. There's little to signpost its impending ability other than 'fast' steering, which initially feels like a ruse to disguise a lot of engine in the nose. It's not. The TT RS gets better the harder you drive it.

While the theatrics at the Bedford Autodrome simply aren't relevant on the public road, it is possible to trail-brake the RS into a corner to an amusing degree, the tail swinging out wide and the nose biting right into the apex. From here it's straight onto the power, and while there's not much more you can do after that to alter your line, the RS resists understeer to an astonishing extent. Hook it all up together, including the incredible resilience of those massive brakes, and the TT RS cuts across the ground at a scintillating pace. 'It's the best and most enjoyable TT I've ever driven,' says Prosser





while we stare at the car in a mixture of awe and surprise. 'So much better than the RS3 – it actually feels light and alert and agile.'

Time, then, for the neatly restyled Porsche and its impossibly crisp panel pressings, which must make manufacturing engineers everywhere flush with excitement. We talk so much in these pages about 'feel', about how a car flows down a road, and of control weights. And guess what? We're about to go on about that touchy-feely stuff again. Drive the same section of road in the Cayman and the nervousness, the busyness of the M2 is immediately notable by its absence. That doesn't make the Porsche dull, but it does have the effect of putting the driver immediately on the offensive. No longer are you mopping up mini-dramas, rather you're picking a line, adjusting it mid-corner, willing there to be more corners just so you can take them on. Push really hard over a

'THE CAYMAN'S DISARMING POISE WILL MAKE YOU GRIN WICKEDLY WHILE DRIVING IT'

Above: the 718 has a chassis to die for, but has Porsche's decision to drop two cylinders killed the Cayman's appeal? **Right:** the BMW M2 suffers from a different problem, especially on the choppy roads of the North York Moors – it simply won't settle

bumpy stretch of road and the 718 finally starts to get busy controlling those 20-inch rims, but 90 per cent of the chassis' efforts are expended into nothing more than background noise, and it never alters your chosen line. The steering is brilliant in its accuracy – more so than ever – and good in its communication, but it's all about being sat deep within the wheelbase, centre of gravity on the deck. It's this disarming poise that will make you grin wickedly while driving this car.

What will make you grimace grotesquely is the engine. The kindest thing you can say about the new motor is that it makes the Cayman S a seriously fast car. The arrival of boost swells the torque in that recognisable variable-vane manner, making the Porsche feel even lighter than it already is. Driven in isolation its performance is certainly impressive, although it's a shock to drive in convoy with a TT RS and be left gasping in a straight line. In such a situation it's necessary to use all of the four-cylinder engine's performance, and that means hanging on to gears, which is where the engine's issues intensify. The 718's gearing is *long*: it'll pull an indicated 81mph in second gear, and this exaggerates the surprising lethargy at low revs, because the engine does very little below 2500rpm. It also means a lot of time spent in the upper reaches of the rev range, and here this engine is belligerently harsh, uncomfortably loud and almost completely devoid of charm. Do you get used to it over time? Maybe. It's certainly different; it undeniably has character.

'What's going on here?' says Prosser in bemusement after a stint in the 718. 'There's lots of performance and it's very muscular through the mid-range, but I hate the soundtrack and there's no drama or excitement in the delivery.' He's right. After the beauty and unique qualities of the old naturally aspirated sixes, this should start a riot.

SOON ENOUGH, A CONCLUSION materialises out of the moorland mist that's hung around all day and is now closing in. If you regularly need the use of back seats and value a reasonable boot, the only car for you here is the M2. That it also looks amusingly tasty, is effortlessly rapid, largely enjoyable to drive and comfortable over distance makes it a sound all-round proposition. But come on, to justify those M stripes it should be more than that. It is perhaps naïve to expect a 2-series-based machine to compete head-on with a bespoke sports car – we do 'get' that – but the M2 isn't just behind on ultimate ability, it still seems to exist in a hinterland between an M Performance BMW and something like the wild M4 GTS. I want to love it, but I no more than like it.

The Audi? I don't know about you, but £50,000-70,000 seems an awful lot of cash for a hatch-based coupe that's unflinchingly ubiquitous in its more standard form. If only the TT RS had some box arches in Audi tradition. In short, if only Audi had matched BMW's aesthetic effort.

Nevertheless, the TT RS is saved by two key attributes, and I expect you've probably gathered what they are by now. Firstly, its unique engine delivers a soundtrack and a level of pace that borders on the narcotic, encouraging an absurd blindness to the price. Secondly, it's surprisingly entertaining to drive, if a bit one-dimensional in the long term. In essence the TT RS is like a mutant hot hatch, a 'hot hatch plus', if you like.

So the Porsche takes it, right? Yes, just. But it's a depressingly hollow victory. No longer can I imagine signing on the dotted line for a Cayman S with my own money. Nearly everything about the 718 sparkles like a jewel, but the engine is a most uncharacteristic fumble by Stuttgart. Don't think for one moment this is us getting all rose-tinted over the six-cylinder motor. That would grossly underestimate where the 718 Cayman S falls short, because we're not only talking about the fluffily abstract notion of appealing sound, but the far broader spectrum of harshness and vibration, delivery, even kerbside manners.

More than anything, this test reaffirms our belief that the 718 Cayman simply must gain a genuine mass-market rival at this price point. A proper sports coupe, but one also designed and built in such a way that it can appeal to almost anyone, and ask for next to no compromises in return – such a difficult trick to pull off.

It must surely weigh 1400kg or less, and not hide behind the convenient 'roadster' caveat; no metal folding hard-tops, overly wide tyres, overly long wheelbases or platform compromises. The Cayman is vulnerable, but until such a time when there's a rival to meet it head on, its rule continues.

But are there better ways to spend your £50k? Look at lightly used cars rather than brand new and that sum could buy you something truly special, as we'll discover in a few pages' time...



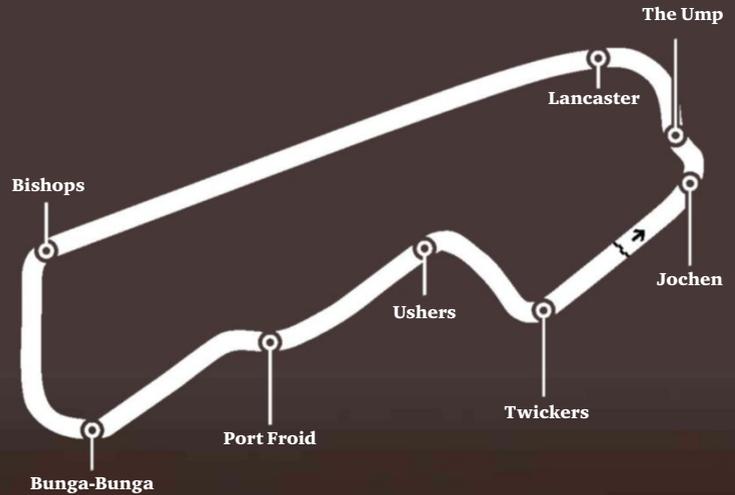
On track

BLYTON PARK

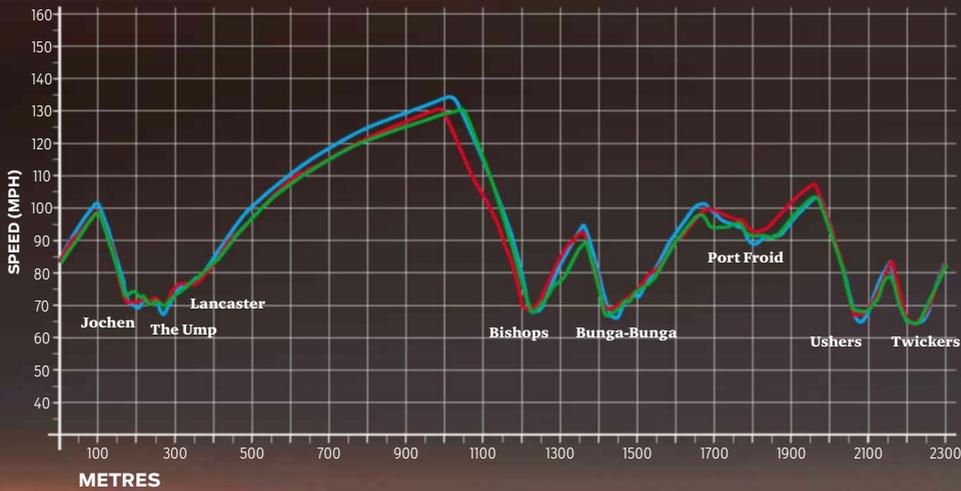
by RICHARD MEADEN

LAP TIMES

● Audi TT RS	1:10.35
● Porsche 718 Cayman S	1:11.01
● BMW M2	1:11.60



Lap-speed traces



‘THE INCLEMENT WEATHER PLAYS TO THE TT RS’S STRENGTHS, BUT THE AUDI ISN’T AT HOME ON TRACK’





Straight-line performance

BRUNTINGTHORPE

by DAN PROSSER

IT'S CHILLY AND WET WHEN WE arrive at Blyton Park with the TT RS and its rivals. Our second attempt to bag some dry laps has also been thwarted, but today we'll unpack the VBOX and press on regardless. With the ambient temperature around nine degrees the tyres stand a chance of working, but with the track slick from overnight rain this is going to be not only a test of traction but also of balance and progressive breakaway characteristics.

For consistency's sake we'll drive with ESP disabled on all three cars. Not just because doing so reveals their true on- and over-the-limit traits, but because a few exploratory laps with electronics active shows the systems are too restrictive to permit decent lap times, even in their most generous modes. Seat of the pants it is, then.

It only takes a few corners to deduce the M2 is going to have a fight on its hands. The lack of traction isn't a great surprise, but it is a hindrance. The bigger problem is the abruptness with which traction is breached. A tendency to oversteer on turn-in doesn't help matters, so you're always chasing the M2's tail. That sounds worse than it is, but every slip, slide and flurry of wheelspin wastes precious tenths at every corner.

You need to be quick to stay on top of it, but ironically the steering is a little too responsive, forcing you to do that trickiest of things: make sharp, precise inputs. What tends to happen is you sometimes overcorrect, which makes for scrappy progress. It's definitely exciting, but not a car you can relax with for a moment, at least when showing it full commitment against the clock. The resulting 1:11.60 is hard won, but not, I suspect, hard to beat.

The inclement weather plays to the TT RS's strengths, but the Audi isn't at home on track. It puts down the rampant five-cylinder motor's power and torque to terrific effect: a look at the data trace shows that whenever the wheels are straight, the TT romps away. There's grip to lean on in the corners, too, but when you do eventually

find the limits of traction and lateral grip, it needs careful handling. The chicane that feeds you into the long, crucial left-hander at Lancaster highlights the TT's propensity to oversteer on a closed throttle. Quick direction changes have a kind of Scandinavian-flick effect, which needs steering lock, throttle and a fair bit of space to catch.

Consequently you tread a fine line between working just to the TT's limits and going way over them. The former is hugely effective, but not much fun; the latter needs space for the Haldex all-wheel-drive system to sort things out. What sweet spot there is between those two is fleeting and inconsistent, but the RS's 1:10.35 is hard to argue with.

And so to the Cayman S. A mid-engined car with lots of torque should be a handful – at least in theory – but the Porsche is far and away the nicest, most exploitable and most enjoyable car to push for a time. It's also the only stick-shift car here, which probably costs it a few tenths but immediately makes it more fun.

The four-cylinder engine works well, summoning strong torque across a broad rev range, and the carbon-ceramic brakes are the best of the bunch, both for feel and ABS intervention. The conditions are so slippery that all three cars rely heavily on their anti-lock-braking systems. Frustratingly, on the Cayman's best lap I'm actually a bit timid on the brakes at the end of the straight, which probably costs a tenth or two.

The 718 doesn't have the traction of the TT, but it's progressive when the rear end does break away under acceleration. It also has truly sublime balance. Nowhere more impressively than the fast right-left at Port Froid, where it carries and sustains considerably more speed because the rear axle is so much better planted. Of the three, it's the car I want to stay out in and keep lapping, which speaks volumes, even if the eventual best of 1:11.01 hands a convincing win to the TT RS. **✘**

THE AUDI TT RS IS SUCH AN undemanding car to launch off the line that an obedient spaniel could be trained to set sub-four-second 0-60mph times in the space of an afternoon. Select Dynamic mode, switch off the stability control and leave the transmission in auto to engage launch control, then watch in awe as the RS pings itself to the single-carriageway national speed limit in 3.4 seconds.

Has so little effort ever been expended while running two-tenths shy of a McLaren F1? On a dry but chilly surface the TT RS's four-wheel-drive system finds so much traction that not a single bhp goes to waste.

Also equipped with a twin-clutch transmission and launch control, but driving two wheels only, the BMW M2 is more than a second slower to 60mph. Still, 4.5 seconds is fairly rapid, but with a useful mid-engined traction advantage the Porsche 718 Cayman S goes a tenth quicker, despite the limitations of its manual gearbox. By 100mph the Audi leads both rivals by more than two seconds.

The TT RS is the quickest off the line, then, and it has more roll-on performance, too, sprinting from 50 to 100mph in fourth gear in 7.3 seconds compared with 8.4 seconds for the M2 and 8.1 seconds for the Cayman.

You can see the full breakdown over the page.

The TT's drift mode

The new TT RS has a drift mode. Audi doesn't mention such a thing in any of its literature and you won't see a button anywhere in the cabin marked 'DRIFT', but trust me, it's there. Turn into a slippery corner on circuit, wait for the front axle to stick, then stand on the throttle.

The car's four-wheel-drive system can send 100 per cent of the torque to either axle, and in this scenario it'll overload the rear wheels so dramatically that the car will swing out into a wide, sweeping four-wheel drift. You barely need to dial in any corrective lock because the car will soon catch the slide itself by diverting drive forwards. It feels exactly like the much-debated drift mode on the Ford Focus RS, in fact.

The Audi won't pull off the same trick on a dry circuit – not willingly, anyway – and disappointingly there's never any sense of on-throttle adjustability on the road. But this is the first TT to exhibit any sort of playful behaviour whatsoever, and that's as significant a development as any other that Audi might care to shout about. **DP**

STANDING-START ACCELERATION (in seconds)

	Speed (mph)													
	10	20	30	40	50	60	70	80	90	100	110	120	130	140
Audi	0.6	1	1.5	2	2.7	3.4	4.3	5.4	6.6	8.1	9.9	11.8	14.3	17.5
BMW	0.9	1.4	2.1	2.8	3.5	4.5	5.6	6.9	8.4	10.2	12.4	15	18.1	22.2
Porsche	0.7	1.3	1.9	2.4	3.5	4.4	5.4	7.1	8.5	10.2	12.8	15	17.7	21.7

IN-GEAR ACCELERATION (in seconds, all in fourth gear)

	Speed (mph)							
	30-50	40-60	50-70	60-80	70-90	80-100	90-110	100-120
Audi	3.6	2.7	2.7	2.8	3.0	3.2	3.4	3.7
BMW	3.2	2.9	3.0	3.1	3.5	3.8	4.2	5.1
Porsche	4.3	3.3	3.1	3.1	3.2	3.4	3.8	4.2

BRAKING (100-0mph)

	Distance (metres)					
	90	92	94	96	98	100
Audi	100.6m (4.5sec)					
BMW	98.5m (4.4sec)					
Porsche	93.9m (4.4sec)					

Porsche 718 Cayman S

Engine Flat-four, 2497cc, turbo **Power** 345bhp @ 6500rpm
Torque 310lb ft @ 1900-4500rpm **Transmission** Six-speed manual, rear-wheel drive, LSD (option), torque vectoring (option) **Front suspension** MacPherson struts, coil springs, adaptive dampers (option), anti-roll bar **Rear suspension** MacPherson struts, coil springs, adaptive dampers (option), anti-roll bar **Brakes** Ventilated carbon-ceramic discs (option), 350mm front and rear **Wheels** 8.5 x 20in front, 10.5 x 20in rear (option) **Tyres** 235/35 R20 front, 265/30 R20 rear
Weight 1355kg **Power-to-weight** 259bhp/ton
0-62mph 4.6sec (claimed) **Top speed** 177mph (claimed)
Basic price £43,834 **On sale** Now

evo rating: ★★★★★

BMW M2

Engine In-line 6-cyl, 2979cc, turbo **Power** 365bhp @ 6500rpm **Torque** 369lb ft @ 1450-4750rpm
Transmission Seven-speed dual-clutch (option), rear-wheel drive, LSD **Front suspension** MacPherson struts, coil springs, adaptive dampers, anti-roll bars **Rear suspension** Multi-link, coil springs, adaptive dampers, anti-roll bars **Brakes** Ventilated discs, 380mm front, 370mm rear **Wheels** 9 x 19in front, 10 x 19in rear **Tyres** 245/35 ZR19 front, 265/35 ZR19 rear
Weight 1520kg **Power-to-weight** 244bhp/ton
0-62mph 4.3sec (claimed) **Top speed** 155mph (limited)
Basic price £44,080 **On sale** Now

evo rating: ★★★★★

Audi TT RS

Engine In-line 5-cyl, 2480cc, turbo **Power** 394bhp @ 5850-7000rpm **Torque** 354lb ft @ 1700-5850rpm
Transmission Seven-speed dual-clutch, four-wheel drive, Torsen differential (rear) **Front suspension** MacPherson struts, coil springs, adaptive dampers (option), anti-roll bar **Rear suspension** Four-link, coil springs, adaptive dampers (option), anti-roll bar **Brakes** Ventilated discs, 370mm front, 310mm rear **Wheels** 9 x 20in front and rear (option) **Tyres** 255/30 R20 front and rear
Weight 1440kg **Power-to-weight** 278bhp/ton
0-62mph 3.7sec (claimed) **Top speed** 155mph (limited)
Basic price £51,800 **On sale** Now

evo rating: ★★★★★





Stainless Sport Cat Back System



Bentayga W12 2016 on



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Titanium Sport & Supersport Rear Sections



Continental Supersports W12 2009-12



Stainless Sport & Supersport Rear Sections



Stainless Secondary Catalyst Delete Section



Continental GT Speed and GTC Speed W12 2007-10



Stainless all Sound options, Rear Sections



Titanium all Sound options, Rear Sections



Stainless Secondary Catalyst Delete Section



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Stainless Sport Rear Sections



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here are three dream cars that will*

AUDI R8 V8

by DAN PROSSER

Engine V8, 4163cc
Power 414bhp @ 7800rpm
Torque 317lb ft @ 4500rpm
Weight 1560kg
Power-to-weight 270bhp/ton
0-62mph 4.6sec (claimed)
Top speed 187mph (claimed)
Price when new £76,725
Price now £40,000-80,000
On sale 2007-2015
evo rating: ★★★★★

ONE THOUSAND SEVEN HUNDRED and forty-eight pounds. That's the difference in price between the brand new TT RS and an eight-year-old Ice Silver R8 – the new car being the more expensive. It was a figure tempting enough to send the entire *evo* editorial team into a fit of finance calculations and ill-informed man-maths. One by one, of course, we all realised that the meagre salary of a journalist just doesn't cut it in the mid-engined supercar world, but the point had been made. Not one of us gave a moment's thought to TT RS repayments.

The R8 in question was an Audi Approved car with a year's warranty. Crucially, this early V8 model had a manual 'box and just 25,000 miles behind it, meaning the only thing missing was 'new-car smell', but I'm told you can buy that in a bottle – £1748 would run to a lifetime's supply.

The arrow-straight and heavily patrolled roads around Las Vegas were not the perfect setting for Richard Meaden to make his first acquaintance with Audi's then-new baby supercar back in 2007 (*evo* 102), but they revealed enough about it for Dickie to conclude that the R8's 'dynamic ability and mouth-watering desirability' would be enough to rattle Porsche. And this was the era when the 911 couldn't lose a group test if it turned up with two leaky dampers and a missing brake caliper.

A couple of months later (*evo* 106), now on the Côte d'Azur, the R8 saw off a perfectly fit 911 Carrera – as well as an Aston Martin V8 Vantage and a BMW M6 – in a comparison test that upended the sports coupe sector

after decades of predictable (read: tedious) stability. The R8 was that good.

It still is, of course, and now £51,800 is enough to buy an exceptionally tidy and very well looked after example. You'll slash that figure by £10,000 or more if you're happy to buy privately and can tolerate one or two more previous keepers. What made the R8 exceptional back then and keeps it so damn tempting now is its sweet chassis balance, crisp and intuitive steering, Lotus-like fluidity over tricky road surfaces, the click-clack of the open-gated manual 'box and, not least, the stirring soundtrack and immediate response of that 4.2-litre V8.

The sports car to supercar power-output latency seems to be around ten years, because the new TT RS gets dangerously close to matching an early R8 in the horsepower stakes. With 414bhp the older car still outguns the 395bhp upstart, but the margin is pretty small and, given the TT's swollen turbocharged torque and rapid-fire twin-clutch gearbox, the difference in straight-line performance will be minimal in the real world. In every other dynamic sense, though, the R8 is streets ahead of the TT RS, good as the new car is.

Yes, the R8's infotainment system looks hopelessly dated compared with the TT's sci-fi Virtual Cockpit – it was designed at a time when Trump's presidency was nothing more than a far-fetched gag on *The Simpsons* – and servicing costs will be rather less palatable on the supercar, but it's an easy one to call, isn't it? Probably worth checking out those finance calculators one last time...



PORSCHE 911 CARRERA GTS

by RICHARD MEADEN

Engine Flat-six, 3800cc
Power 402bhp @ 7300rpm
Torque 310lb ft @ 4200-5600rpm
Weight 1420kg
Power-to-weight 288bhp/ton
0-62mph 4.6sec (claimed)
Top speed 190mph (claimed)
Price when new £76,758
Price now £55,000-70,000
On sale 2010-2012
evo rating: ★★★★★

THESE BEING THE PAGES OF EVO, it's inevitable that some flavour of Porsche 911 features in a 'used alternatives' piece. We just can't help ourselves, can we?

Truth be told, good used 911s are often the pin to burst many a hopeful new coupe's bubble, for they are always perceived to be at least a league above whatever they're compared with. Besides, Porsche's rear-engined stalwart might be a bit of a cliché, but unless you simply can't abide them, 911 ownership is a genuine and worthy aspiration for many.

You'd be crazy not to at least explore the notion of parking a 911 on your driveway, especially with a budget equivalent to the new TT RS or one of its rivals. So which to choose? If it were my money I'd find it very hard to resist the 997 Carrera GTS.

There was always something special about this model, right from the off. Introduced in 2010, at the end of the 997's life cycle, it could have been just another run-out model. Yes, it was laden with options to make it seem like irresistible value, but it was also a wide-body car fitted with the special Power Kit motor (good for 408bhp, and previously a ferociously expensive option), plus centre-lock wheels and a choice of manual or PDK transmissions. Further options included sports suspension, carbon-ceramic brakes and a limited-slip differential. Find one of the handful thus equipped and you really do have something very special.

Eventually you could get a GTS in four-wheel-drive and cabriolet forms, but for me

it was always the two-wheel-drive coupe that held the greatest appeal. It was – and is – a cracking machine: a model at the end of its days but also right at the top of its game. And, being a 911, it felt smaller, more characterful, more consistent and more communicative than its successor. A truth amplified by the fact early 991s were a bit below par.

The best non-GT (that's to say non-Motorsport) 911 money could buy, the 997 GTS achieved instant cult status. A fact reflected in solid residual values, even as the 991 rendered it obsolete. Since then values have steadily strengthened. A quick scan of the online classifieds tells its own story. Sub-£60k examples are out there, but the very best can go as high as £70k – the price of a TT RS with options. That's something of a double-edged sword, both for buyers and existing owners. Such strong prices are hard to swallow when you're buying, but it comes with the reassurance of zero depreciation or maybe continued (modest) appreciation. The downside of chasing that particular rainbow is that it could well stop you using your car as freely as you'd otherwise like.

Given the beauty of the 997 GTS has always been its perfectly rounded abilities and irresistible usability, that would be a real shame. Few 911s before or since have been blessed with the breadth of talent to take everyday use in their stride yet offer a driving high so sweet you're left questioning the need for anything faster or more aggressive.



BMW 1M

by NICK TROTT

Engine Straight-six, 2979cc, twin-turbo

Power 335bhp @ 5900rpm

Torque 369lb ft @ 1500-4500rpm

Weight 1495kg

Power-to-weight 228bhp/ton

0-62mph 4.8sec (claimed)

Top speed 155mph (limited)

Price when new £40,000

Price now £40,000-62,000

On sale 2011-2012

evo rating: ★★★★★

IS IT ANY SURPRISE THAT THE BMW 1-series M Coupe is fast approaching modern-classic status? After all, it ticks every box. It was the first proper M-car to use turbocharging, it had a manual six-speed gearbox and looked so pumped that the World Anti-Doping Agency had serious questions to ask of BMW's design office. It was rare too – just 450 came to the UK.

I ran a 1M on *evo*'s Fast Fleet and loved it. I have to say, I would prefer to own one over the current M2. In rounding off the 1M's edges, the M2 has objectively improved but it has lost some of the purity that defined the older car's character. I appreciate that this is a subjective point, but the 1M was singularly unapologetic. The ride was hard, the power delivery spiky at times, and the rear grip was – how can I put this? – sub-optimal in less than perfect conditions.

But I loved all this and more. I loved that it made you a better driver: perfecting heel-and-toe changes and asking you to carefully meter out the power. It is the polar opposite of so many of today's 'stamp and go' performance cars. I also loved the fact that even in M Dynamic mode you could agitate the rear into oversteer, and hold it. It was doing a form of drift mode before drift modes became a thing.

Switch everything off and it was a true challenge. The short wheelbase and aggressive M differential demanded

quick reactions, but if you responded in kind, the 1M was dizzyingly entertaining, helped undoubtedly by its 50:50 weight distribution. Certainly not for the faint-hearted, but if you like your thrills accompanied by jabs of adrenalin...

Criticisms? At around 24mpg, the 53-litre fuel tank never yielded much more than 300 miles between refills, and the ride and brakes weren't good enough. The damping always felt rather abrupt on the 1M, and we could never get in more than two laps of the Bedford Autodrome before the brakes wilted. If I owned a 1M now, I'd head to Litchfield and ask the guys to sort both issues. And while they were at it, I'd ask them to boost the power a little from the standard 335bhp. Despite the lunacy of the 1M, you always seem to want more from it.

In terms of everyday use, if you could handle the ride, it was brilliant. Compact enough to feel lithe on B-roads or in the city, and loaded with options such as Bluetooth, DAB, Harman Kardon surround-sound, satnav, voice control and heated seats. Today it feels barely older than the M2.

The 1M came third in eCoty 2011, beating the Porsche Cayman R, Lamborghini Aventador LP700-4 and Ferrari FF. Indeed, only the sublime Porsche 911 GT3 RS 4.0 and McLaren 12C finished ahead on points. That's how good it was, and six years later still is. ☒





Stainless Sport Exhaust System



911 GT3 (991) 2014 on



Stainless Sport Secondary Silencer Delete Pipes



911 (991) 3.4, 3.8 2012-15



Titanium Sport Exhaust System



997 Turbo & GT2 2008-11



Stainless Sport System Cat Back



911 (997) GT3 2007 on



Stainless Sport System



Panamera S 4S GTS V8 2008-14



Stainless Active Sport System



Cayman S 3.4 (987 Gen2) 2009-12



Stainless Active Sport Systems



Boxster S 3.4 (987 Gen2) 2009-12



Stainless Sport Rear Sections



911 Carrera (997) 2005-11



Stainless Sport System inc. Race-Cats



911 Turbo & GT2 (996) 2001-06



Stainless Sport Rear Sections



911 Carrera (996) 1997-05

SUPERIOR EXHAUST SYSTEMS FOR THE WORLD'S FINEST CARS



LOST AND CONFUSED

evo.co.uk's web editor is a slave to technology. So we sent him to navigate on a classic rally. With a map

by HUNTER SKIPWORTH

I MESSED ABOUT AT SCHOOL. BORED, distracted, teenage, hormonal – whatever the excuse, it all manifested itself in maths lessons. If only I'd known that numeracy and co-driving a rally car were intrinsically linked I might have listened. Sadly I didn't, and those years of doodling in exercise books are about to come back and bite me.

Then again, the 13-year-old me never thought he'd be sitting in the co-driver's seat of a stripped-out Mk2 Golf GTI competing in a live rally. So now, at the exact point where I need the cranium processing power of Stephen Hawking, my grey matter rivals that of Donald Trump. How could I have forgotten how to do sums?

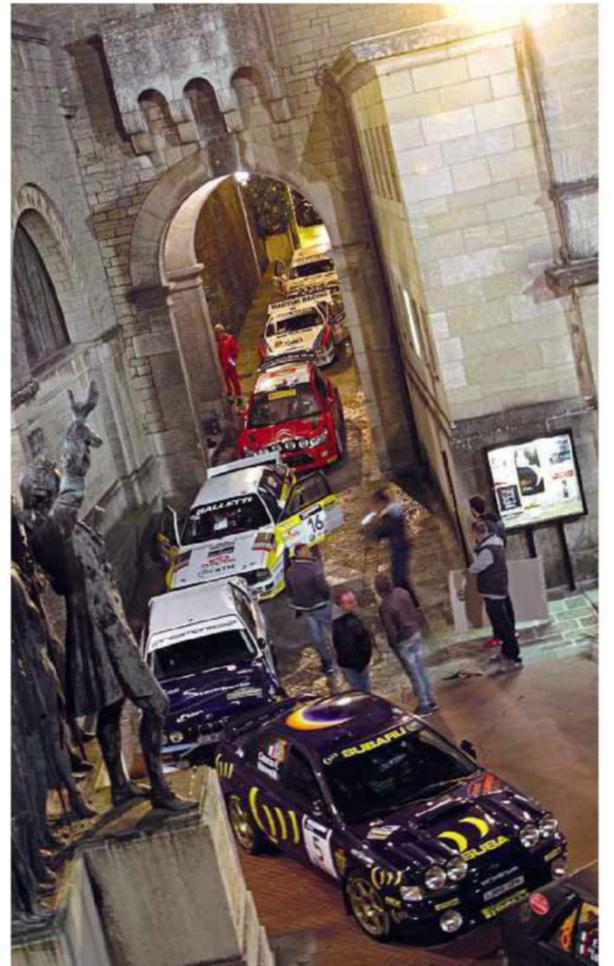
'You just add the difference onto our time that the timekeeper writes on the time-card. That's when we start,' explains my driver, Fabian Kreim. The 24-year-old recently wrapped up the German Rally Championship in his Skoda Fabia R5, and I'll be calling notes for him today. I start counting with my fingers. Kreim laughs. I send us to time-control a minute early and we get a penalty. We'll laugh about this later in the bar. Won't we?

WHEN EVO'S RESIDENT GRUMP, Stuart Gallagher, asked if I wanted to sit beside a rally driver at the Rallylegend event and call the pace notes,

I thought our esteemed managing editor was winding me up. He typically sends me to cover the reveal of a new satnav, not to partake in a rally. Of course, I didn't believe I'd be co-driving for real, rather it would be a PR exercise to give a pampered hack the opportunity to experience what a professional co-driver does...

When I arrive in San Marino – a landlocked microstate located on Italy's eastern side, and the venue for Rallylegend – Volkswagen Motorsport wastes no time on my education and sits me down with the unforgettable Luis Moya. Co-driver to two-time World Rally Champion Carlos Sainz, Moya is one of the most successful co-drivers in the history of the sport. And now he has to teach me how it's done. With the pleasantries out of the way and me having asked how it felt to lose a world title 700 metres from the end of a rally (might as well get the elephant out of the room as early as possible, I say), I settle down to the most baffling lesson of my life.

Rallylegend takes place over three days and sees a huge selection of classic rally cars competing over stages in and around the City of San Marino. I will be co-driving Fabian in his 1987 Golf, which is currently being prepared by VW's WRC mechanics under an awning zipped to a truck. This is serious. My rally will start on the final day, Sunday, so I have two days to immerse





Far left: Skipworth (middle) and VW's Polo R WRC from 2014. It boasts AWD, more than 300bhp and a sequential 'box. **Left:** Kreim's Mk2 Golf doesn't have quite the same firepower, but he pedals it at a prodigious rate

'I spot the Golf, the one with my name stickered to the window, goading my confidence. I wonder if I can call in sick? There's every chance I'm going to be'

myself in Historic rallying and try to look like I understand what's expected of me. I don't, so I'll have to bluff it. I decide I might even wear my Nomex overalls to breakfast on Sunday.

This bravado all takes place before I clock parc fermé and reality does its thing of popping up and poking me in both eyes. Parked up is every iconic rally car you can think of, a roll call of who's who from the last 40 years of the sport: Stratos, Quattro, Integrale, RS, Evo, STI... And then I spot the Golf, the one with my name stickered to the window, goading my confidence. I wonder if I can call in sick? There's every chance I'm going to be.

The bark of an Audi Quattro provides a welcome distraction on Friday night. Watching it fly past, with the passionate crowd waving, cheering and jumping for joy, is a reminder that rallying still holds a special place in many hearts. Flashguns and flares light the night sky, lightpods bring daylight to the city's streets, which make up the opening special stages. What was I thinking? What am I doing? What time is the first flight out of here?

SUDDENLY IT'S SUNDAY AND I'M IN THE co-driver's seat of Kreim's car. A man I've never met before is tugging around my crotch as I squirm to free the buckle I'm sitting on. I gave the Terratrip measuring device a good kick on my way in, too. It's designed to be reset by the co-driver to aid in reconciling the written notes with distance markers in the road book, but I'll have to use the rapidly approaching scenery as a guide because it's now broken.

Stage one is a tight 2km tarmac stage run through an industrial estate. It's not exactly the Col du Turini, which is a good thing. Three minutes. Three minutes before I have to tell Kreim where to go. Three minutes to double, triple, quadruple check that I'm on the correct page (yes I am) and that I know what to do once the timekeeper has counted us down. I call 'Go!' when he's still on two. Kreim ignores my premature yelp and we leave on time.

It's as the timekeeper is counting us down that I remember my biggest fear. It's not reading the notes wrongly and getting lost

(well, actually that is one of them), and it's not fearing for my life while a driver I've never met before tries to show me how it's done (OK, that too). No, my biggest fear is being carsick. I always am as a passenger. I knew there was something I meant to put on the form asking about my dietary requirements: 'No meat, no fish, no flat-out rides whilst trying to read a book.'

Two kilometres done and my lap isn't soaked in diced carrots and milkshake. I've got this. Then I see stage two is ten times the length. Kreim offers some encouragement and advice: 'I don't mind if you get things wrong, just please warn me about the chicanes. They can be bad.' I thought this may be the case. I'd even looked for them in the road book and noticed the word 'CHICANE' printed in red capital letters next to every one. Fabian, there's nothing to worry about.

Time-card stamped, then the 120-second wait. This time I get the countdown right and for the briefest of moments my pace notes, too. For more than a handful of seconds and metres I am a rally co-driver. I am Nicky Grist guiding Colin through Kielder. Robert Reid talking Richard Burns through the Acropolis. Luis pointing out the path to another world title...

'Hairpin left, caution jump.'

'What jump? The jump doesn't come for another 4km!'

Ummm. Really? And that's it. I'm lost, with absolutely no idea what's coming up and when. I'm a passenger. Kreim's deadhead. I can do nothing but watch the scenery fly by and admire the plucky Golf's truly unexpected performance.

We head into San Marino city on the day's last stage, Kreim having long given up on my note-calling ability and using his experience to get us from stage start to finish. It's probably safer that way. But as we sprint up the last incline and into a hairpin, the enthusiastic crowd cheering us all the way, camera flashes popping, me with notes in hand and our VW buzzing away around us, I feel like a co-driver. A rubbish one, but a co-driver nevertheless. Now, where's the bar? ☒





Stainless Sport System inc. Carbon Tips



Cooper S inc. JCW 2.0 3 & 5 Door 2015 on



Stainless Sport System inc. Carbon tips



Cooper & One 1.5 3 & 5 Door 2014 on



Stainless Sport System inc. Carbon Tips



Paceman Cooper S 2wd & ALL4 R61 2013-15



Stainless Sport System inc. Carbon Tips



Countryman Cooper S 2wd, ALL4 & JCW R60 2010-15



Stainless Sport System inc. Carbon Tips



Coupe & Roadster Cooper S R58 & R59 2011-15



Stainless Sport System inc. Carbon Tips



Clubman Cooper S R55 2008-14



Stainless Sport System inc. Carbon Tips



Convertible Cooper S R57 2009-14



Stainless Sport System inc. Carbon Tips



Cooper S R56 2006-14



Stainless Sport System



Stainless Manifold and 'Race Cat'



Cooper S R53 2002-06



Stainless Sport System



Stainless Manifold and 'Race Cat'



Cooper & One R50 2001-06

SUPERIOR EXHAUST SYSTEMS FOR THE WORLD'S FINEST CARS



*No ferries, said Ferrari,
or racetracks, and no
more than 300 miles. And
24 hours maximum. So,
what to do with a 769bhp
F12tdf for the day?*

24

H E A V E N

TWENTY-FOUR HOURS, 300 MILES.

That's how long we can keep, and how far we are allowed to drive, this Ferrari F12tdf. What to do with it? Track use is off limits and the small print says that we must not cross the channel. There's a brief thought of putting it on a trailer and taking it to the Scottish Highlands, but that would be a right faff and would leave us with about ten minutes at the wheel. So we'll simply go for a nice drive in the country and pop in to see some friends for tea. Car-minded sort of friends.

There's some good history in Slough, apart from being the location for Ricky Gervais's *The Office*. Ford Advanced Vehicles' workshop was on the Slough Trading Estate (in a building that was later the home of JW Automotive, of Gulf GT40 and 917 fame) and so was Team Surtees before it moved to Kent. In the mid-'60s Lola was in premises on Yeovil Road, which is just around the corner from Ferrari's main office. You go to the showroom at the old Maranello

by COLIN GOODWIN

PHOTOGRAPHY by
ASTON PARROTT







He was only allowed a few laps around Fiorano and a few hours on local roads but gathered enough thoughts to give me the impression that this is a car that needs to be treated with utmost caution. No understeer, very direct steering and a rather unusual sensation provided by its rear-wheel-steering system. I think it unlikely that I will twiddle the manettino to the ESC Off position today, but to keep it in the Wet setting would show a lack of self-confidence that might worry photographer Aston Parrott, so Race will do, with the suspension still set to Bumpy Road. At least the interior ergonomics are superb – what you don't need in a car that can do 0-62mph in 2.9 seconds are distractions.

We have a plan: we're going to visit the Prescott Hill Climb course, near Cheltenham. I love the place and Parrott will be able to do some photography undisturbed. Stuart Webster, who runs Prescott, has said that when the hill isn't used for competition it's the driveway to several houses, so there'll be no blasting up it in the tdf at full bore. This should keep us within Ferrari's 'no tracks' rule.

Prescott House and its hill were bought in 1937 by the Bugatti Owners' Club, which was looking for its own hill-climb course having been kicked out of most venues because of noise complaints. Nothing new under the sun or in motorsport. The first meeting at Prescott was in 1938 and apart from the war getting in the way it has been used ever since. The original course was 880 yards long but in 1960 a loop was added, called Ettore's, extending it to 1127 yards, or just over a kilometre. Today all meetings run on the longer course except for the annual Vintage Sports Car Club event.

Unlike Shelsley Walsh, which has one significant corner to

'What you don't need in a car that can do

Concessionaires in Egham to buy your Ferrari but test cars are collected from a nondescript building in Slough.

If I was Ferrari I'd get the council to re-lay the road outside its office. It's bumpy as hell and even with the tdf's suspension in the softest, 'Bumpy Road' setting, it's not doing my back much good. I might not be able to walk by the end of today. Thankfully, when we reach a better bit of blacktop the ride becomes acceptable. Stiff, but no need for the osteopath yet.

What an engine. The tdf's 6.3-litre V12 produces 769bhp at 8500rpm. It is the most powerful naturally aspirated engine I've ever experienced, and that includes the 8.2-litre Chevy in a McLaren M8F Can-Am car. But it's not just the power output that's staggering, it's how refined those 12 cylinders are. Barely above tickover with the seven-speed dual-clutch 'box already in fifth along Slough's Bath Road and today's electronics act like an IV drip of Strepils to prevent any coughing or hesitation. Twenty years ago an engine producing this amount of power per litre would have been cammy and agitated in traffic. Forty years ago it wouldn't have ticked over under 2000rpm and would have oiled its plugs at the first set of traffic lights unless you sat there with the throttles wide open.

The roads are rather damp this morning. This worries me. I have briefed myself by reading Jethro Bovingdon's pilot's notes from the F12tdf's launch in Italy (*evo* 217).

Above and right: 110kg weight saving over the standard F12 plus an extra 39bhp give the tdf a truly explosive power-to-weight ratio of 514bhp per ton – more than enough for the Prescott hill climb





0-62mph in 2.9 seconds are distractions'

get wrong, Prescott is seriously technical with many sections and details to catch you out and ruin a time, and quite a few places to have a substantial shunt. I've driven it a few times in anger and it's very challenging. Traversing it at a more sensible pace today, I'm glad I'm not against the clock. It would be a very serious challenge in the tdf, as apart from traction being an issue for virtually the whole length of the course, the Ferrari is not a narrow car. Accuracy would be key.

For lunch I'm going to have to eat my own words. For the last few years I've been on a campaign against ridiculous power outputs in road cars. Hot hatches with 350bhp and SUVs with 500bhp are missing the point and in 2016 are totally out of step with reality. Of course, the F12 doesn't need even the 730bhp it has in standard form; with an extra 39bhp the tdf is even more excessive, but I can't help loving this engine, even though it only adds to the fear that one day all engines will have some form of forced induction. This V12 is up there with Lamborghini's V12 and the 4-litre flat-six in the GT3 RS as one of the great engines of today. And it ranks above these because even the Aventador's motor feels tame in comparison.

The first proper trip I made in a Ferrari was in a 456 GT. Ferrari gave us a mileage limit with that car, too, but I was more of a rebel in those days and gave it back with an extra 3000 miles on the clock. It was a road trip of flat-out blasts and disregard for French speed limits. I've never forgotten it, or the





‘It’s one of the most dramatic Ferraris I’ve

car, and it started a love affair with front-engined Ferraris. Now the tdf is proving to be the most dramatic of the lot.

We spot a plaque that celebrates the life of FitzRoy Somerset, 5th Baron Raglan. A Bugatti fanatic and chairman of the Bugatti Owners’ Club from the late ’80s and into the ’90s, he kept his Type 51 in the kitchen of his house. Yonks ago I was having a curry in Abergavenny when there was the scream of supercharged engine as a car pulled up outside. It was Baron Raglan in his 51 come to collect his takeaway. Class.

Under Webster’s guidance Prescott has developed hill climbing at the venue to be more of a family day out, with a lot more entertainment than watching a weird and wonderful selection of cars blasting by. Not that I need much else apart from a loo and a picnic.

We depart and set off to see my mate Vic Norman. He runs the Breitling wing-walking team that flies Boeing-Stearman biplanes with Lycra-clad girls up on their wings. The team is based near Cirencester – suitably close to Prescott for us to not commit an odometric crime and upset Ferrari.

Four Stearman biplanes are sufficient to draw me regularly to the airfield. But like many of us, Vic’s into anything with an engine and as well as owning a 550 Maranello, a Porsche 356, an AC Ace and an ex-Stirling Moss XK120, he has a collection of motorbikes that includes a 1912 Flying Merkel. It was once

used to power a generator in a gold mine previously owned by Bud Ekins, the stuntman and friend of Steve McQueen who performed the jump in *The Great Escape*.

It’s not so much what he owns now that makes Norman interesting, it’s what he’s owned in the past. Particularly V12 Ferraris. For example, the 250 GTO that’s now owned by Nick Mason. ‘I bought it in the early ’70s,’ explains Norman. ‘I’d heard on the grapevine that Peter “Pete the Bun” Newens, whose family owned the Maids of Honour tearoom in Kew, was thinking of selling his GTO. I wasted no time and went round to Pete’s house and started negotiations. He wanted about 13 grand for the car. Anyway, while I was talking to him I saw Brian Classic, the racer and classic car dealer, coming up the front path. Guessing that Brian had also heard about the GTO, I immediately offered the asking price and shook on it. Brian was a bit peeved.’

After keeping it for a few years, during which time it delivered young Normans to school and completed other domestic tasks, the GTO was moved on. ‘I got £16,000 for it,’ says Norman, ‘which I thought was amazing.’ As well as the GTO, Norman has owned a couple of 275 GTBs, a 250 GT SWB and a Daytona. ‘Ironically my favourite Ferrari is the original 250 GT TdF. I never owned one but I’ve driven a few. Ferrari was at the top of its game in the late-1950s.’

I've never taken the kids to school in a GTO but I've been shopping in Vic's, now Mason's, GTO. Cammy, as to be expected, but easy to drive and with as much soul as a car could have. Mason's Ten Tenths, the company that runs and prepares his collection, is based at the same airfield. And since any excuse to fire up and listen to a classic Ferrari V12 mustn't be missed, engineers Charles Knill-Jones and Ben de Chair (double-overhead surnames aren't compulsory: the outfit is managed by Mike Hallowes) are persuaded to start the GTO and bring it outside for Parrott's and my pleasure.

Mason has just taken delivery of his own F12tdf. Unlike ours, it has lightweight carpets covering the industrial-looking anti-slip material that's standard and rather more comfortable seats. 'That,' says Knill-Jones, pointing at the tdf, 'is the best road car in the world. I drove Nick's at Goodwood and it was doing 168mph at the end of the Lavant Straight.' I didn't need to hear that. I'd dearly love to drive this car on a track, particularly at Goodwood. I'm now beginning to wish I'd risked being put on the naughty step by Ferrari.

It is true that a 769bhp Ferrari capable of over 211mph is of limited practical use, but it is a very good thing that it exists. The tdf is one of the most dramatic Ferraris that I've ever driven (in fact it's up there with a McLaren F1) yet it's perfectly useable on the road and, if you're damned careful, in any conditions, too. I'd like to hope that among the lucky 799 who have ordered one, there will be people like Baron Raglan and Vic Norman who use their cars. I suspect most will go into collections or heated garages.

At least this one is getting some proper use. Back at Slough, with the Tour de Force in one piece, the trip meter reads 316 miles. Today was not the day to start obeying rules. ☒



Above: Goodwin guides the F12 up the technical Prescott course, being careful not to prang any carbonfibre bodywork.
Below: tdf with Nick Mason's 1962 250 GTO

driven, yet it's perfectly useable on the road'



Ferrari F12tdf

- Engine** V12, 6262cc
- CO2** 360g/km
- Power** 769bhp @ 8500rpm
- Torque** 520lb ft @ 6250rpm
- Transmission** Seven-speed DCT, rear-wheel drive, E-diff 3, F1 Trac, ESC
- Front suspension** Double wishbones, coil springs, adaptive dampers, anti-roll bar
- Rear suspension** Multi-link, coil springs, adaptive dampers, anti-roll bar, rear-wheel steer
- Brakes** Ventilated carbon-ceramic discs, 398mm front, 360mm rear, ABS, EBD
- Wheels** 10 x 20in front, 11.5 x 20in rear
- Tyres** 275/35 ZR20 front, 315/35 ZR20 rear
- Weight** 1520kg
- Power-to-weight** 514bhp/ton
- 0-62mph** 2.9sec (claimed)
- Top speed** 211mph+ (claimed)
- Basic price** £339,000 (sold out)
- evo rating:** ★★★★★



OPPOSITES

*They're poles apart in execution,
but the new Lotus Evora Sport 410
and revised Nissan GT-R cost similar
money and have a shared purpose.
So how do they compare?*

by RICHARD MEADEN

PHOTOGRAPHY by GUS GREGORY

CHALK AND CHEESE. APPLES AND ORANGES. Night and day. Six things with more in common than the Nissan GT-R and Lotus Evora Sport 410. And yet, this odd couple make a compelling pair. For although their differences in approach are clear and numerous, key similarities are there if you care to look.

At circa £80,000, both cost very similar money, and while the respective outputs of their forced-induction V6s are wildly different, physics applies its own parity via the power-to-weight ratios. Each has a supercar-challenging top speed of 190mph or more. Crucially, both cars offer an alternative take on established and more conventional rivals, with you – the driver – at the centre of their world.

No question, these are individual machines. Cars with characters as distinct and disparate as the cultures from which they were born. They've both been round the block, too, the R35 GT-R being launched in 2007, the Evora in 2009. In that time each has evolved through numerous iterations to get to this point; a point where the Nissan has been made more civilised and the Lotus more hardcore.

Before we get into the driving, it's worth looking at



A T T R A C T

how these latest 2017MY models have changed. The GT-R's tweaks are less extensive, but promise to have a significant effect on the car. Aero and styling mods have improved cooling and given the basic GT-R a look that borrows from its extreme Nismo brethren. There's a bit more power (20bhp to be precise, giving 562bhp) thanks to an increase in boost pressure higher up the rev range, though the big Nissan has never been short on poke. It's the suspension that has come in for the most significant changes, with a move towards much increased pliancy in all three damper settings. It'll be fascinating to discover how these changes affect the notoriously iron-fisted GT-R on bumpy British roads.

Lotus has taken the opposite tack with the Evora Sport 410, by subjecting the car to a ruthless weight reduction programme. A carbonfibre splitter, front inspection panel, roof and tailgate, diffuser and rear quarter panels drop weight and the centre of gravity, while minimalist carbonfibre sports seats save 9kg. Junking the rear seats saves further vital kilos and gains a useful luggage area. There's also a lithium-ion battery and ten-spoke forged alloy wheels, bringing the total down to 1325kg – or 427kg lighter than the GT-R. An optional titanium exhaust (as fitted here) can trim another 10kg from that.

The Toyota-sourced supercharged V6 gets a tickle, too,

gaining 10bhp from a new water-to-air chargecooler, bringing the total up to 410bhp. A more effective aerodynamic package lowers the drag coefficient, but doubles high-speed downforce. The dampers have been re-valved for increased compression and rebound. The springs remain unchanged, but the effective spring rate increases courtesy of the reduced weight of the car, and the ride height is down by 5mm. A Torsen limited-slip diff and a set of Michelin Pilot Sport Cup 2 tyres round things off.

Our intention is to compare both cars on road and track, but sadly the weather has other ideas; one of the mildest autumns in recent memory comes to an abrupt end the morning we head to the Bedford Autodrome to get some timed laps. Not only is it wet, it's cold. Like 4°C cold, which is too chilly for warmth-loving Cup 2 compounds. Exploratory laps in both cars provide graphic evidence that there's no chance of generating representative or meaningful times, but it does offer the chance to explore – and exceed – the limits of grip and traction in safety.

The GT-R has always been a car of contradictions, one with a reputation forged through motorsport success, but one that (to me) has never felt especially at home on track. Much of this is rooted in its apparently huge reserves of on-road performance. With speed limits to obey and other road





Above: on regular roads the GT-R makes mincemeat of most things in its path, including the Evora Sport 410. **Right:** where the GT-R looks thuggish, the Evora appears lithe

users to respect, the GT-R fosters a sense of boundless grip and an unquenchable thirst for the horizon. Of course, you rarely get the chance to uncork it for more than a few seconds at a time, so taking a GT-R on track should be the perfect opportunity to gorge yourself on the forbidden fruits of all that power, torque and traction. What you don't bargain on, yet always arrives to spoil the party, are those pesky laws of physics the GT-R appears to sidestep so convincingly on the road.

At 1752kg the GT-R is carrying some timber. Not that you'd know it when your foot's pressed firmly on the throttle. But hit the brakes and work the steering wheel in an environment where you can really probe the car's limits and you become very aware of the forces at work. Wet conditions remove the brutality from the way the GT-R attacks a lap, but you still feel it fighting itself and the track if you attempt to bully it.

It's one of the great ironies that all-wheel-drive cars can be the most challenging to drive to their limits in tricky conditions. Part of that is because you're arriving at the corners carrying more speed, but it's also because they tend to do more things from turn-in to corner exit. The GT-R is no exception. Depending on how you prepare it for the corner it can exhibit turn-in oversteer or understeer, find its balance as you start to squeeze the throttle, fade to power understeer, build to a big, all-wheel drift or spike into full-on oversteer. Sometimes it feels like you get all of that in one corner.



*'THE GT-R'S
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Whatever it does, you need time and space for things to play out, whether that means letting the momentum bleed away or keeping it lit and letting the front and rear axles fight it out between themselves. It's a challenge with only occasional rewards. Mostly the GT-R feels cumbersome, a bit hit-and-miss.

Swap to the Evora and it immediately feels flighty and ultra-agile. Far from needing to cajole it, you quickly learn to ease it into and through the corners. This process of stripping back your inputs requires discipline and sensitivity, especially in these ultra-slippery conditions, but once you've gauged the Sport 410's front-end bite you can commit it to corners with precision and consistency.

The trick is to lean on the grippy, super-responsive front end just enough to initiate a hint of a slide from the rear, then gently pick things up on the throttle and balance the slide with some corrective lock and your right foot. It'll take a few goes for you to get a feel for the diff, but once you understand it favours early, progressive throttle play, you really can get the Evora dancing along a tightrope where slip just favours grip.

It's a more intuitive, more consistent process than in the GT-R. And while you don't get the explosive punch from corner exit and down the straights, it's more fun, too. It would be fascinating to see how these cars compare on a dry track, as Lotus claims the Sport 410 is three seconds quicker around Hethel than the Evora 400.

For now, though, we have the road element to look forward to. I stick with the Lotus as we head to our well-trodden test routes that traverse the Bedfordshire/Northamptonshire border. After slithering around the track I'm nervous as to how the cars will feel on wet roads, but with the Evora's Dynamic Performance Management (DPM) system set to Sport, there's enough of an electronic safety net to relax into the drive.

Lightweight cars always take a special kind of commitment from the driver and the pared-back Sport 410 is a case in point. The carbon seats may save 9kg per chair, but they aren't the most inviting things to look at. Nor are they hugely comfortable. The upside is you sit low in the car, which has a sense of occasion thanks to its spartan ambience. The driving position is sound and you get a nice view out over the arcing front wheelarches. The rearward view is almost non-existent thanks to the heavily louvred engine cover and lack of side windows aft of the B-pillar.

The Sport 410 has a choice of a six-speed stick-shift or six-speed paddleshift automatic transmission. Our test car has a stick so you still have the pleasure of working the Evora through the gears, even if the shift quality is a bit snaggy. The V6 is grunty and raucous, especially if you have the exhaust in its sport mode. Thanks to the generous torque delivery and light weight the Sport 410 is a quick car, even when you're not trying that hard. It just seems to want to settle at three-figure speeds, so you have to make a conscious effort to drive slowly.

As befits the Sport moniker, the Evora 410 feels firmer and more responsive than other Lotus models. There's still some pliancy to the damping, but the edges of the ride are sharper, its responses keener. The steering is quick – quicker than I expect and, to be honest, a little too quick for my liking. The Evora flows best and feels sweetest if you make small, smooth inputs. You seem to nudge it rather than pour it into corners, and because you spend less time applying smaller amounts of lock you have less time to get a feel for the grip and the car's responses.

There's no doubting the available grip, or how this translates into point-to-point pace, but it seems in chasing a more urgent, scalpel-sharp drive there's less of that supple, measured Lotus feel to savour. That said, you're always aware of the Evora's lithe build, in the way it changes direction, copes with crests

Below, from left: GT-R's twin-turbo V6 and purposeful front wheelarch vents; Sport 410's carbonfibre seats save 9kg; engine cover is carbon, too

'THE NISSAN REALLY IS A FORCE OF NATURE. A BIG,





BLUFF WEDGE OF TECHNOLOGY AND MYTHOLOGY'

and undulations and punches down the road. It's a wonderfully athletic machine with a uniquely focused way of doing things.

I've always enjoyed following cars in road tests; you often learn as much from watching the body language of a car as from driving it. Having spent many a mile watching mesmerised from the Evora as the GT-R shouldered its way along a fast B-road, it's fabulous to be able to overlay that mental image with the sensations you get from its driving seat.

The Nissan really is a force of nature. A big, bluff wedge of technology and mythology, its presence fills the road literally and metaphorically. The engine's deep, turbine-like howl melds with muffled transmission whine, and the whole ensemble hardens under load as you punch the throttle and feel yourself gripped by G-force and intense temptation.

Away from the track it's a different machine. One that feels so well within itself you immediately regain that belief you're impervious to the laws of physics. The way you can simply drop the Evora from your mirrors with a concerted few seconds of acceleration is startling, and still a major part of the GT-R's appeal. It's an absolute rocketship on regular roads.

The real departure for this 2017MY version is the suspension. In GT-R's of yore you'd basically get in, start the engine and

immediately reach for the suspension switch and pull it down into Comfort mode, such was the firmness of the setup. In this car you can't quite believe how compliant it is in Normal mode, let alone Comfort, to the point where if you're out on the open road you're tempted to knock the dampers into 'R' to regain a proper sense of connection. The steering doesn't have the same responsiveness as before either, and seems to require a fraction more lock than you expect to get the nose nicely turned in. It's just a little bit woolly round the edges – something I never expected to write about a GT-R.

It's not a disaster, but it's not particularly confidence-inspiring in slippery conditions, especially as that extra fraction of steering input can then lead to the nose pushing a little wide of the mark. It's far from an understeering pig, but the GT-R's nose has always been so solid and locked down that it feels a bit spooky to not have 100 per cent faith in its ability to find some bite. It's commendable that Nissan has engineered a car that now has the suspension compliance to work well on a typical British back road, and therefore as an everyday car. It's just a shame that this more rounded ride comfort has come at the expense of driver connection and confidence. Not least because if you remove that physicality from the dynamic equation you



Lotus Evora Sport 410

Engine V6, 3456cc, supercharged
CO2 225g/km
Power 410bhp @ 7000rpm
Torque 310lb ft @ 3500rpm
Transmission Six-speed manual, rear-wheel drive, limited-slip diff
Front suspension Double wishbones, coil springs, dampers, anti-roll bar
Rear suspension Double wishbones, coil springs, dampers, anti-roll bar
Brakes Ventilated discs, 370mm front, 350mm rear, ABS
Wheels 19in front, 20in rear
Tyres 235/35 R19 front, 285/30 R20 rear, Michelin Pilot Sport Cup 2
Weight 1325kg
Power-to-weight 314bhp/ton
0-62mph 4.2sec (claimed)
Top speed 190mph (claimed)
Basic price £82,000
On sale Now

evo rating: ★★★★★

Nissan GT-R

Engine V6, 3799cc, twin-turbo
CO2 275g/km
Power 562bhp @ 6800rpm
Torque 470lb ft @ 3600-5800rpm
Transmission Six-speed dual-clutch, four-wheel drive, limited-slip diff
Front suspension Double wishbones, aluminium upper links, coil springs, adaptive dampers, anti-roll bar
Rear suspension Multi-link, aluminium upper links, coil springs, adaptive dampers, anti-roll bar
Brakes Ventilated discs, 390mm front, 326mm rear, ABS, EBD, Brake Assist
Wheels 9.5 x 20in front, 10.5 x 20in rear
Tyres 255/40 R20 front, 285/35 R20 rear, Dunlop SportMaxx GT 600 DSST
Weight 1752kg
Power-to-weight 326bhp/ton
0-62mph 2.7sec (claimed)
Top speed 196mph (claimed)
Basic price £79,995
On sale Now

evo rating: ★★★★★

simply become even more reliant on the GT-R's straight-line fireworks. And that sells the car short.

The logic in repositioning the entry-level GT-R as a less combative, more civilised and habitable car is sound, but it feels like a vital layer or two of connection has been lost.

And the Lotus? The Evora has always been a worthy, if confused car. Or rather the Elise and Exige have always felt truer to the Lotus brand. The Evora 410 was a big step in the right direction, and the lighter, sharper and considerably quicker Sport 410 shows Lotus playing to its strengths. Some have tagged it the GT3 of the Evora range, but that's stretching it. Not because the weight saving, aero work and chassis changes miss the mark, but because the engine and gearbox don't have the pedigree or reach to deliver genuine magic.

My head tells me the GT-R is the faster, more useable proposition. My heart tells me the Evora's focus and purity mean it's the one I would enjoy driving more. Unfortunately experience tells me the current turbocharged Porsche 911 Carrera S is more than quick, connected and composed enough to cover all those bases while adding a few tricks of its own.

Of course, a 911 would be the default choice for so many. One tantamount to heresy for the diehards who revel in the less obvious, more individual choices this pair represent. If forced to call a finishing order I'd say an intensely hardcore Lotus is more on-message with this magazine than a more comfortable GT-R. But as each model enters its twilight years it's good to know they still deliver experiences worth celebrating. ☒



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INSIDE RICARDO

WHY THE THRILL OF DRIVING IS IN SAFE HANDS





Ricardo designs gearboxes for Bugatti and makes engines for McLaren. But it's also an environmental consulting business, so is uniquely positioned to comment on whether evo and cleaner transport can ever be happy bedfellows

by NICK TROTT

PHOTOGRAPHY by ASTON PARROTT

Ricardo's Technical Centre at Shoreham-by-Sea is an Aladdin's cave.

You walk through its corridors open-jawed at the treasures within. Treasures such as Sir Harry Ricardo's first internal combustion unit (a 2-litre single-cylinder pump engine built between 1901 and 1903) and a Mark V tank motor (Britain's first mass-produced engine – used in WWI). Then you see a viscous coupling (used in Group B rally cars and numerous road cars), a twin-clutch gearbox from the Veyron, the JCB Dieselmex engines, the latest Focus RS engine and then, the pièce de résistance, the huge hall where McLaren's V8 twin-turbo engine is assembled. All are Ricardo designed, engineered or built. Some are all three.

This is a company proud of its history, as a recently opened Centenary Innovation Centre that celebrates its achievements shows. But it's also a business looking forward – peering into the future and proposing solutions to cure some of the biggest headaches facing not only the motoring industry but the world. As a whole, it sees itself as a global environmental and technical consulting organisation.

Professor Neville Jackson, chief technology and innovation officer, says, 'We've grown from the old days where we were focused on advanced powertrain R&D and now we consult at the top levels in government to give advice on long-term environmental strategy.' Or in other words, Ricardo plays a huge part in shaping legislation – legislation that impacts on air quality, clean and sustainable energy, and waste management.

With a foot in both the performance car and environmental camps, few are better placed to discuss the challenges facing motorists, and particularly those who drive for pleasure.

MARK GARRETT, CHIEF OPERATING officer, joins Professor Jackson to host *evo*, and sure enough it doesn't take long before dieselgate rears its ugly head (about 30 seconds). But how will this scandal shape future motoring? Jackson and Garrett are in no doubt that it will accelerate a move towards electric-powered cars.

'I think the issues with VW and issues with urban air quality, the two of which are not related, have led a lot of the industry to realise that big shifts [towards electrification] are required,' explains Jackson. 'We're going to electrify,' adds

Garrett, 'the only real debate is how fast we do it.'

But it's not just dieselgate that is causing a shift, explains Garrett. 'We are seeing the megatrends of urbanisation, changing ownership structures, more wealth, more middle-class people, huge population growth.' It's these forces, claims Garrett, that are driving a rate of change in the automotive sector that has never been seen. In short, after 131 years of the motorcar, we're only just entering its most significant phase of change.

'It's pretty clear that by 2020 at least half the models on sale will be electrified in some form or other,' Garrett continues. 'A recent study suggested that by 2030 there will be less than ten per cent diesel sold across Europe, which given we're at 52, 53 per cent today is a massive shift.'

The risk is that this rapid move to electrification can't happen without sound analysis and evidence. Dieselgate could impact on this, as governments and consumers want swift resolutions.

'We're in the situation we're in today because we haven't understood exactly what the impacts were likely to be in the past,' says Garrett. 'We've had relatively weak regulation but with over-optimistic assumptions on the impact that will have on the environment. We as an engineering community need to provide better analysis to the policymakers in order to make those future regulations more sensible and deliver what's required.'

So what about the plan to ban cars built before 1997 from Paris? Is this an example of policymakers ignoring sound evidence? 'We need to be able to show what the impacts of things are,' says Garrett. 'For instance, if you ban that sector, what's the *real* impact? There's a danger you might ban a group of vehicles then find it's had no impact whatsoever, and the economic costs of that would be disastrous. It's got to be based on sound scientific analysis and common sense. The last thing you want to see are knee-jerk reactions that don't deliver what was expected, because we'll all be in the doghouse again.'

Does Garrett think there's the patience within the engineering *and* political communities to allow the science to deliver the rationale? After all, politicians exist in election cycles.

'Quite frankly it is much easier to predict the technology than to predict what the policymakers



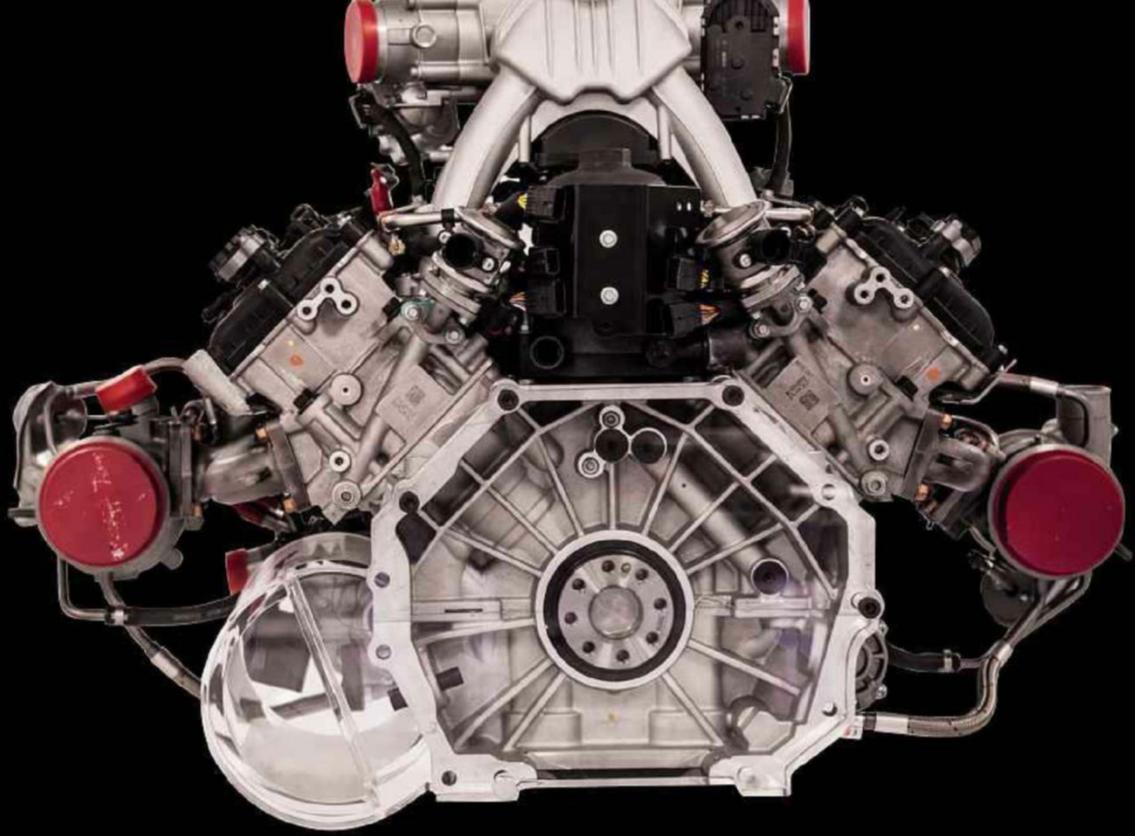
'THERE IS A DANGER YOU MIGHT BAN A WHOLE GROUP OF VEHICLES AND THEN FIND IT'S HAD NO IMPACT WHATSOEVER'



Clockwise from top left: Veyron gearbox was a Ricardo project; Professor Neville Jackson (top) and Mike Garrett; McLaren's twin-turbo V8 is built by Ricardo; Harry Ricardo's single-cylinder

pump engine of 1901; one of the pair of 751bhp, 5-litre four-cylinder turbodiesels fitted to the 350mph JCB Dieselmax (above). **Opposite:** Ricardo's Centenary Innovation Centre





Above: McLaren V8 laid bare. **Left and bottom right:** Ricardo is a company of petrolheads, as the staff car park shows. **Bottom left:** a 48-volt hybrid Ford prototype,

also pictured being driven by *evo*'s Nick Trott in this story's opening image. **Below:** quartz piston crown allows pictures to be taken of fuel spray and combustion



‘PEOPLE NEED TO ASK, “DO I WANT TO OWN MY CAR? AND IF I OWN MY CAR, WHAT IS THE REASON FOR THAT?”’

will do,’ he says. ‘For instance, who would have guessed, this time last year, we’d have voted to leave the EU?’

‘I think we’re all aware that politicians can use information to suit their own specific policy agenda, frankly,’ says Jackson. ‘It’s very much a case of using information appropriately and I think there are lots of different levers that the politicians will pull, in a lot of cases to get the right solution, but maybe not always through the most appropriate means.

‘There is an issue; it’s how you deal with it that’s going to be important. I think there are two agendas here. Most European governments, and US regulators as well, are trying to push the electrification agenda, primarily on air quality. Nothing to do with carbon dioxide emissions, it’s all about air quality. “Can I have more electric vehicles in the city centre?” That’s what it’s about.

‘On the other hand, the rate of change from what we would see as a conventional powertrain to a high degree of electrification represents a massive investment cost for the industry. The debate we’re having is how fast can you make that happen? How fast can you move to electrification while still staying in business, keeping people employed, using all those capital assets you’ve invested in and getting some kind of return for them?’

‘It’s not so straightforward to manage that transition in a very short period. The industry is committed to doing it in the medium term, but to try to do it in the short term is a major financial challenge. Not only that, but to move to electrification, we need the infrastructure in place as well – the charging infrastructure. The more electric vehicles you have, the more charging stations you have, and the more you want to use them. Particularly moving long distances, the bigger batteries you’re going to fit means you need a more powerful recharging network, which has big implications on our charging infrastructure and our electricity-provision infrastructure.’

Garrett explains that the cost of switching to electrification can’t be underestimated, not only in terms of decarbonising the electricity supply but also the complexity involved in delivering high-power charge points in local areas. ‘Not only that, with things as they are, if everybody on a road tried to charge up, the whole thing will fall apart.’

RICARDO BELIEVES THAT THE NEXT generation of road users may rewrite the rules of car ownership and usage, and that manufacturers cannot ignore the growth of car clubs and sharing services such as Zipcar and Lyft. And in terms of the Thrill of Driving, surveys of 16- to 24-year-olds suggest that they’d rather spend their money on an experience rather than hardware to own.

However, one key development in any move to on-demand motoring is cars that are engineered

to be better suited to their primary purpose.

‘With conventional ownership models, we have one powertrain that has to do everything from “I’ve got to drive into the city” to “I want to do some inter-city mobility” and “I want to move some things down to the refuse dump,”’ explains Garrett. ‘But what if the thinking was, “What kind of vehicle do I really need to suit my needs?” If there was a different ownership model, you could have the vehicle that you need, when you need it, for the purpose that it was intended. A small vehicle to go into the city, a different vehicle to go between cities, a larger vehicle if you needed to move things about. It works so much better and it means you can provide more dedicated powertrains for the purpose they’re best used for.’

Consequently, according to Jackson and Garrett, if a large market for on-demand motoring materialises, then the next generation of motor vehicle will be used more often – just not necessarily by the same person.

According to Jackson, most cars are in use less than five per cent of the time. If this increased via ‘i-mobility’ schemes, manufacturers could afford to put much greater levels of technology into a car, making it more fit for purpose. They would also see a much greater return on investment.

‘We’re saying to manufacturers: all those things you’re really struggling to be able to fit into this architecture, now you can because you can afford a lot of the connectivity, the autonomous features, the premium motor and battery technology, because you’ll get a return on that in a fraction of the time an individual user would.’

However, to get to this point, Jackson believes the ownership model has to be better defined. Manufacturers will need to find an equitable solution between business-to-consumer and business-to-business, or ‘just become a service provider rather than a product provider’.

According to Garrett, a scenario could emerge whereby fewer cars are being used to greater effect, which could have a drastic impact on congestion levels. Jackson agrees: ‘Utilisation is key, whether it’s road space in the city or it’s the vehicles themselves. We’ve got to improve utilisation. So, using the roads more efficiently and using vehicles more efficiently. The average occupancy is, what, 1.3 people in a five-seater? How stupid is that?’

So if we ever get to a point where road space is being used more efficiently, what does that mean for those of us who enjoy driving? Those who, I’d wager, are happy to reconcile five per cent utilisation with 100 per cent ownership.

‘Why spend so much on product which is only utilised five per cent of the time?’ asks Garrett. ‘I think it differentiates between those to whom it’s an aspirational product to own as opposed to a utility product to use. People need to ask, “Do I



Above: Harry Ricardo's first car engine – from a 1930s Citroën Rosalie.
Below: one of Ricardo's 34 engine test facilities at Shoreham. This is an 'end-of-line' rig designed to quality check McLaren's V8



want to own my car or not? And if I own my car, what's the reason for that? Is it because I mainly want some form of entertainment?"

In this respect, will prestige-value or one-upmanship continue to be a factor in car ownership? And will people want to own a car simply to advertise the fact they can drive in an age when a lot of people might not know how to?

THE ELEPHANT IN THE ROOM HAS BEEN the move to autonomous driving. For many, the thought of driverless vehicles is liberating. For others it's the opposite. Nearly every day we hear of a new autonomous car and/or updates that bring cars to the brink of full autonomy. But why haven't we already seen a large-scale rollout of driverless cars? Are we struggling less with the technology and more with the philosophy?

'Fully unconditional automation?' asks Jackson. 'We're struggling with more holistic aspects of this than just the technology. For instance, can we certify that we've dealt with every eventuality? When you and I are given permission to drive cars it's because we've passed a driving test. What's the equivalent driving test for an automated vehicle? How do you prove what's competent?'

'And that's quite apart from the whole moral dilemma,' adds Garrett. 'If you're programming a vehicle to behave in certain circumstances, what happens when you're driving down a road and somebody pulls out with a pram in front of you? Do you not do anything and run the pushchair over? Or do you swerve and hit the tree and kill the occupants? One way or the other, as a human being you make an instantaneous choice. And better or worse, you live with the consequences.'

Jackson believes there is a long way to go before machine learning and artificial intelligence are at a stage where full autonomy in a mixed driving environment is a reality, and the biggest hurdle to overcome is the human factor in mixed driving conditions. 'We can have a situation where every vehicle connects with every other vehicle, everybody knows where each vehicle is and, as such, if you follow a number of rules everything is safe. The challenge is when you introduce a few unpredictable human drivers in that. Garrett agrees, and adds that to get to a fully autonomous environment we'll need to pass through a mixed environment to get there, which is far more difficult than a fully autonomous scenario.

The big question, I propose, is whether we should go through the mixed-environment scenario. Should we remove the human element and create zones solely for autonomous vehicles?

'We've looked at this,' says Garrett, 'and the key issue comes back to utilisation. How do I manage the interface between a fully automated system and a mixed or human system? How can I make that efficient so that I'm making best use of my

infrastructure? Whichever way you look at it, it's virtually impossible to get to a better utilisation by having that interface. I've got to keep every human-driven vehicle out of that zone and then I'm limited to just autonomous in the zone.

'How do you deal with this if you've got to jump out of one vehicle into another? We can do it with trains because they're completely separate, but to deal with them in a real city centre is much more difficult, particularly in a megacity.' Garrett adds that Ricardo is doing trials and demonstrating what can be done, and that towns such as Milton Keynes or newer cities in the Middle East pose fewer problems. 'But to do it in megacities such as Shanghai or Beijing or London...' Garrett raises his eyebrows at the enormity of this task.

SO LET'S END ON A BIG QUESTION FOR *evo* readers: will we witness the death of not only internal combustion but also of the concept of driver enjoyment within the next ten years?

'I've got an optimistic view that says, particularly in the short- to medium-term, there are a lot of advantages in selling electrification and performance,' says Jackson. 'So, here's your bog-standard combustion-engine car, which has actually got fairly mediocre performance. It's the best you can probably do on environmental performance, but if you want physical performance here's our more electrified version, which gives you more power, more control, it's also a little bit greener.'

'If you really want your supercar, the only one to have is one that is heavily electrified because it gives you the most performance and has less impact on the environment.'

'As a company, we take a holistic view. When it comes to transport, we think about the system, from cycling to walking to cars and public and goods transport. How it all works together.'

'Nevertheless, we look at advanced fields because combustion-engine vehicles are still going to be a significant part of the transport sector for the next 25 years, no question about it. Even with more electrification, most of them are still going to have a combustion engine. So lightweighting, advanced integrated powertrain systems, lightweight transmissions, efficient optimisation of the whole system – it's all as, if not more, important.'

'Many politicians would like to say: "Let's all go electric tomorrow, that'll fix all our problems." We know it won't, and the truth is that we will be living with combustion engines for a long time to come, so developing systems that make the technology more efficient is a priority.' ❏

Join the debate by emailing letters@evo.co.uk. If your vehicle was fully autonomous, and you're not allowed to drive it, would you want to own it?



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ASSIGNMENT





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IT TAKES A LOCAL TO SNAP ME OUT OF MY blissful ignorance. Partly because the thrashing of a Nissan Patrol's 44-inch tyres is difficult to ignore when it's occurring at eye level, but mostly for the look its occupants give as they pass. Incredulity would cover it, but pity is an appropriate surrogate. Either way, the drawn-out passing manoeuvre and perplexed looks are enough to remind me that what I'm doing isn't, by Icelandic standards, normal.

Driving certain cars endows one with something approximating celebrity. The Nissan GT-R, even after all these years, still has the presence to make people stop, stare and whip out a cameraphone. Italian supercars do too, and while you can slide by crowds unnoticed in a Porsche 911, doing the same thing without attracting admiring glances in a Mercedes-AMG GT or a BMW i8 is nigh on impossible.

The Mazda MX-5 doesn't quite pull off this feat in the UK, but in Iceland, with the roof down, you'd struggle to draw more attention if you were Björk. Mazda's roadster is not a familiar car on the Nordic island: Reykjavík's lone Mazda dealer has sold just two. Not two this month, or this year – two in total. From worldwide sales of over a million since 1989. Given the city receives around 40 more rainy days than London every year and 400 hours' less sunshine (and it's among the milder areas on the island), this is perhaps not surprising. As I stroll around the world's northernmost capital on a crisp evening, I spot a bright yellow third-generation Toyota MR2 parked outside an apartment block, and briefly wonder whether I've stumbled across the residence of the village idiot.

Keen to discover more villages that might be missing theirs, I set off to the north on the first leg of a journey that few will ever attempt in a small Japanese convertible: Iceland's Route 1 'Hringvegur' ring-road. The highway, equivalent to a British A-road in most places and



Above: spectacular Godafoss waterfall lies not far from Akureyri in the northern part of the island. **Right:** this MX-5 is an 'Icon' special edition; extra features include a new chin spoiler and racy decals



still surfaced with gravel in a couple of sections, winds its way around the entire country over the course of 828 miles. It cuts through mountains and volcanic regions, hugs fjords and rocky outcrops, and skims a narrow path between the Atlantic coastline and the tongue-like glaciers that rasp their way down from the island's highlands before calving off great chunks of ancient ice at the coast.

Leaving the cosy confines of Reykjavík's Hotel Borg and instantly dropping the roof isn't quite as uncomfortable as I'd expected. It's mid-September and surprisingly mild, and while Atlantic gusts swirl their way around the cabin, the sun is putting up a good fight, highlighting patches of the green, mountainous terrain that surrounds the city.

The MX-5 is not a fast car – certainly not in 1.5-litre guise, as here. On paper it only loses a second to the 2-litre model to 62mph (8.3sec versus 7.3), but from the moment I pull out into traffic in Reykjavík, the half-litre deficit is immediately apparent. As the road starts to climb and twist, it's clear you need to work the four-cylinder unit hard, though like the larger motor there's an inertia-free feeling to the way it responds to throttle inputs and a sense of mechanical integrity about it that melts any fears you may have about spending long periods in the higher reaches of the rev range.

'When I itch, I must scratch,' the Icelandic say. It's equivalent to our more familiar 'if the shoe fits...', and it's somewhat relevant here because in Iceland the 1.5's outright lack of pace isn't frustrating so much as appropriate. The national speed limit is just 90kph (56mph) and drops to 80kph (50mph) on gravel. Exceeding these limits by more than a few kph brings with it an instant fine equivalent to

'ROUTE 1 SKIMS A NARROW PATH BETWEEN THE ATLANTIC AND TONGUE-LIKE GLACIERS'





around £70, and this rapidly rises into hundreds and even thousands of pounds as the speed increases. There's no get-out-of-jail-free card for tourists, either. Which is unfortunate, as big speeds can land you in a cell until the justice system can find a judge to preside over your case. 129bhp? Er, that should be fine, thanks.

Anyway, one of the great joys of convertible driving is being able to supplant actual speed with the sensations of it, and the latest MX-5 nails the required balance. It lets enough of a breeze into the cockpit to let you know you're motoring along, but even as the temperature drops it remains refined enough to make roof-down its default state. Like the engine, the car's heating system feels faintly over-engineered; the temperature knob is never twirled into its final third and I daren't venture beyond one illuminated segment on the heated seats for fear of being rendered infertile. I've brought a hat and gloves along but for most of the trip they will go unused, as the former gently cooks my head and the latter's woollen construction is not conducive to gripping the leather-rimmed steering wheel.

The further I stray from Reykjavík, the less it seems like Iceland is inhabited at all. With everyone travelling at roughly the same pace on the gently flowing roads, it's rare to encounter any cars in your own lane, and oncoming traffic seems to comprise mainly gaily-coloured camper vans or the near-ubiquitous rental Suzuki Vitaras full of starry-eyed tourists. The scenery is changing but I can't shake the familiarity – verdant mountains redolent of those in the Scottish Highlands give way to views of the arid yet occasionally chilled landscapes between the Rocky Mountains and Sierra Nevada.

Roughly halfway along the north coast and around 230 miles into

the trip, America fades back into Scotland as the road descends into Akureyri, an important fishing port and the island's second-largest city. A tight schedule means a stop isn't possible, but the brightly painted buildings provide a brief flash of colour in my peripheral vision before I cross the Eyjafjörður ('Island fjord'), hang on to the Mazda's lower gears, and climb back towards the centre of the island. There's a rasp to the exhaust and blips of the floor-hinged throttle pedal are accompanied by a chuff of induction noise. Like with the original MX-5, you know it's been cynically tuned to sound like a sports car of yore, but it feels so much more genuine than the piped-in noises you'll find elsewhere and more satisfying as a result. The shift action itself is predictably slick, too, though the constant engineered-in vibration of the gearlever seems a rose-tint too far. The shifter in the first-generation MX-5 doesn't shimmy in the same way but feels even oilier, more mechanical to slot.

The scenery wants for little, but taxing for low-slung sports cars Route 1 is not so far. You feel the country's topography leaves little figurative room for a road-builder's creativity. Wide, flat valleys carved by glaciers draw simple paths between towns and villages. There's little incentive to send a road winding up a mountainside and cascading down the opposite face, as those who laid spaghetti through the Alps or aforementioned Rockies seem to have done. The straights are long, the curves gentle. The surface is perfect, too, resilient to poor weather but untroubled by the hundreds, rather than hundreds of thousands, of cars that pass over it each day. Where landscapes haven't been carved by ice they've been formed by ancient lava flows, leaving vast, flat volcanic plains and Arctic tundra.



Above left: Ingram plays the conscientious tourist to perfection. **Above:** smooth sweepers carve through the volcanic landscape. **Top right:** Aurora Borealis lights up the night sky

Lakes, too, and as Hringvegur curls around Mývatn ('Lake of Midges', whose winged inhabitants have mercifully disappeared by the autumn, leaving the roadster's nose unspeckled) the road finally breaks into some tighter turns. It's still possible to maintain the country's speed limit but the corners encourage you to build some load through the MX-5's chassis. In 1.5-litre form you get 16-inch wheels (an inch smaller than those on the 2-litre), no limited-slip differential and no uprated Bilstein dampers. The combination makes the car even more prone to roll than *evo*'s 2-litre long-termer – wiggling the steering to and fro rocks the car around its roll axis like the springs are made from trifle – but where the more powerful model can feel disjointed and rides firmly despite ample body roll, the softer car seems a little more fluid.

Reykjahlíð lies to the north-east of Mývatn and marks the gateway to the eerie, active-volcanic landscape south of the Krafla Caldera (a huge geological cauldron). Plumes of steam rise from deep geothermal wells, whose sulphuric smell instantly pervades the Mazda's cabin. Yellowstone Park, the similar prehistoric terrain of which I visited a few years ago, is where my thoughts land this time. A hardy few explore the thin trails that lead through bubbling pits of boiling mud. For the first time, there's a tangible sense of the island's churning geology in action. Krafla and a series of other volcanoes that cut through Iceland from its northern to its southern coast are the ever-present reminder that Iceland is being torn asunder, stretched between the North American and Eurasian tectonic plates.

Few places I've ever visited match the isolation of Iceland's north-eastern plains. America's deserts come closest, but the roads that slice

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CABIN’

through them are pockmarked by civilisation. In Iceland, you feel like the only living being for miles around. The roads often track arrow straight, with no obstacles to disrupt their path towards the horizon. At 56mph, you get plenty of time alone with your thoughts. I mostly mull on whether the person who implemented that speed limit had ever left the confines of Reykjavík.

As night rolls in, and with around 400 miles covered, I reach Egilsstaðir, the country’s largest easterly town. Parking up, I finally pull up the roof. This, just like the process of stowing it, is the work of one arm. People have long claimed this possible of MX-5s but the current car is the first that doesn’t require you to have a ball-joint mid-spine to comfortably reach back from the driver’s seat.

LEAVING THE NEXT MORNING, FLASK FRESHLY brimmed with hotel coffee, I drop the canvas before even thumbing the starter button. At this time of year autumnal colours stain the few deciduous trees that cling on to life in the subpolar climate, and damp roads from an overnight shower add a different, whooshing timbre to the sound of tyres on tarmac.

It doesn’t last for long as just south of Egilsstaðir is the first section of gravel road. The surface is smooth at first, with a firm layer below a thin topping of loose chippings, but as the track climbs up into glacially formed ranges along the coast, the road becomes rougher and small steering corrections are required to keep the MX-5 on course. Low-lying cloud begins to obscure the views either side and I hug the hillside rather than straying too close to the inevitable, shrouded drop to the other side.

And then, as suddenly as the mist had rolled in, it disperses. Churning, sinister clouds hang above the valley, its earthen yellows and browns broken only by small patches of green farmland and the glistening snail-trail left by a river. And before it all, two perfect, gravel-strewn hairpins that strive to trim some height from the mountain road before it rollercoasters into the valley below. On regular all-season tyres the front wheels scud away at the loose surface and the steering refuses to filter back many messages, neither of which inspires confidence when local authorities have a laid-back attitude to Armco placement. With no limited-slip differential, slides are a little more scrappy than they might be with one installed, but after a day of sticking rigidly to speed limits, this one small section feels like it was designed with MX-5-driving tourists in mind.





‘MINIMAL
TRAFFIC AND
SWEEPING
TURNS HAVE
MADE THE MX-5
A PERFECT
MATCH’



As the road reaches the coast at Breiðdalsvík the tarmac returns, but a few miles further and it's gone again. Of the entire route, just 20 miles remain unpaved, but the sense of adventure they lend to Route 1 – particularly in a small, open-topped two-seater – far outweighs that implied by the limited distance. They're also the gateway to some of Hringvegur's best driving roads, as it tightly grips the coastal topography in both direction and elevation.

The crests, swoops and compressions again bring to mind Scotland, and the occasional open stretch is enough to pass ambling tourists without troubling the speed limit. The MX-5 doesn't feel quite as tied-down on undulating roads as a similarly priced hot hatch, but there's balance that few of those can replicate with their front-biased weight distribution. The steering still irks – the response is there, the feedback isn't – but it's hard not to feel Mazda has met its brief to develop a car that more or less anyone can enjoy.

Southern Iceland is also home to its most iconic views. Here my data banks are empty – nothing I've ever seen compares to the massive Vatnajökull Glacier as its outlets churn their steady paths towards the North Atlantic. Hoffellsjökull appears first, a twisting river of ice sandwiched between two mountain ranges. Every few miles a new outlet appears, coinciding with a metal bridge that spans either side of the glacier's outwash plain.

It's still a surprise when Jökulsárlón appears, however. Iceland's most famous glacial outlet, the lake is home to a changing field of electric-blue icebergs (the colour the result of a lack of light-refracting bubbles of air), which separate from a glacier nearly a mile inland. It would be serene but for Jökulsárlón's status as one of the country's biggest tourist attractions, and after briefly setting foot in the inevitable gift shop I decide it's high time for more isolation.

After 598 miles of roofless driving, Iceland finally shows its precipitous side as an Atlantic squall rolls across the southern plains. After a few miles of kidding myself, I decide it's becoming a little too fresh and finally raise the hood and cocoon myself in the Mazda's compact cabin. Rain lashes against the windscreen and wind tries to push the car's nose from its path, and I begin to appreciate how useable the modern MX-5 has become.

Beyond the town of Selfoss the Hringvegur starts to descend back into Reykjavík. The cloak of darkness highlights through street lights just how small the city is. Small, but after two days in almost total isolation, still a shock to the system as I join the back of a queue of traffic. The MX-5 has always been about preservation of momentum, keen responses and sheer brio making up for any deficiency in performance, and the last few days of minimal traffic and sweeping turns have made it a perfect match. If Mazda of Reykjavík hasn't sold at least three MX-5s by now, I might have to return in my own MX-5 to convince them further. ☒

Above left: stunning blue icebergs at Jökulsárlón. **Top right:** Iceland's glaciers make for a magical and imposing sight. **Left and right:** MX-5's roof stayed down for all but a handful of Route 1's 828 miles



Mazda MX-5 1.5 'Icon'

Engine In-line 4-cyl, 1496cc **CO2** 139g/km **Power** 129bhp @ 7000rpm **Torque** 111lb ft @ 4800rpm

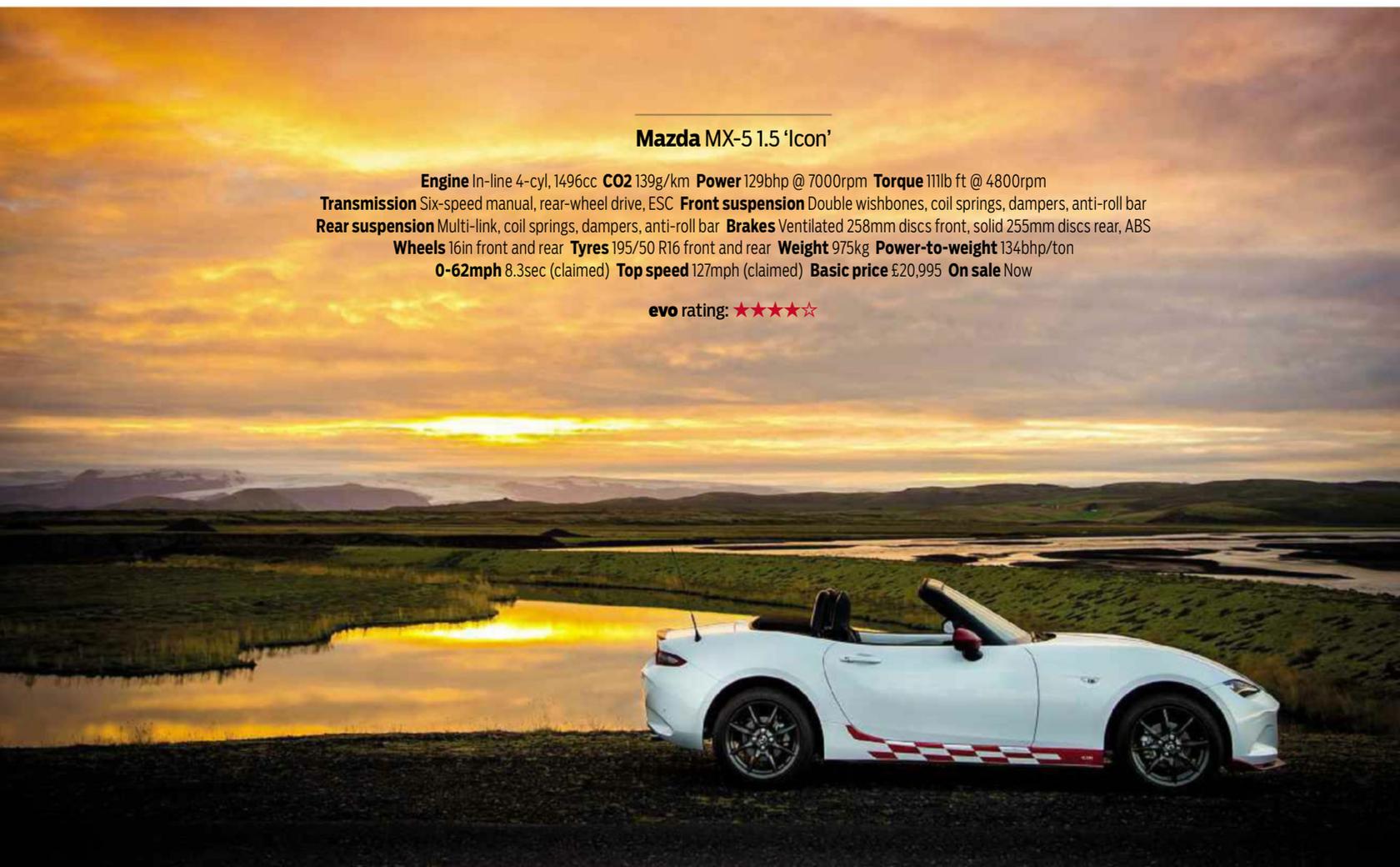
Transmission Six-speed manual, rear-wheel drive, ESC **Front suspension** Double wishbones, coil springs, dampers, anti-roll bar

Rear suspension Multi-link, coil springs, dampers, anti-roll bar **Brakes** Ventilated 258mm discs front, solid 255mm discs rear, ABS

Wheels 16in front and rear **Tyres** 195/50 R16 front and rear **Weight** 975kg **Power-to-weight** 134bhp/ton

0-62mph 8.3sec (claimed) **Top speed** 127mph (claimed) **Basic price** £20,995 **On sale** Now

evo rating: ★★★★★



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VW GOLF GTI Mk2 // **AUDI** RS6 AVANT PERFORMANCE // **KIA** PROCEED GT // **MAZDA** MX-5 Mk4

NEW ARRIVAL

Lamborghini Aventador LP700-4



Italian? Check. V12? Check. Orange? Check. This Aventador ticked all the boxes for a place on Simon George's supercar experience fleet. And it means he also has a new daily driver

F FOR MOST BUSINESSES, sinking the best part of a quarter of a million pounds into new machinery is a pretty significant decision. When that machinery happens to be a V12-engined Lamborghini, it's one you want to be particularly sure of.

Only a tiny minority of the 6th Gear Experience's 45,000 annual customers are actually petrolheads. The overwhelming majority are members of the public who have been bought a driving experience as a gift. This means most aren't quite sure which supercar is which, although a Ferrari has to be red and any Aston Martin is usually associated with James Bond.

That said, there are some cars that most customers instantly recognise as something special. The Ferrari 458 Italia is one, a big V12 Lambo another. Anything with doors that go upwards always goes down a storm. Throw in a bright colour and you have the pulling power of a bikini-clad Kelly Brook stood amongst a line of smartly attired fashion models.

Enter the Aventador LP700-4. Another Sant'Agata supercar had been on the cards for some

time. Prices, though, have recently firmed up, with even the earliest Aventadors seldom dropping below £220,000 (they cost £260,040 new).

It was a tip-off through a main dealer that led us to LJ12 KJZ, which was a bit leggy at 24,000 miles but had a full Lamborghini service history complete with every invoice. *And* it was the right colour and sported a plain black interior. Not my personal preference, but spot-on for what we needed it for. Additionally, the carbon-ceramic brakes had recently been replaced at an eye-watering £18,000. Regular readers may remember my thoughts on ceramics, which work well for an owner who is familiar with how they behave but are not ideal for use by a customer who isn't – and that's even with an experienced instructor in the passenger seat with their own stop pedal. So whether the ceramics stay, we'll have to see.

After a lengthy inspection, a deal was struck at £205,000 and within 24 hours our new leviathan was negotiating its way at speed around Castle Combe. And I really do mean speed – 690bhp propels just 1575kg for a power-to-weight ratio that matches a Carrera GT's.

First impressions? It's difficult to write anything that hasn't been said before, of course, but compared with the Murciélagos we have run in the past, the Aventador unsurprisingly feels punchier, although both models seem to have almost identical all-wheel-drive handling characteristics. I'm guessing that with its more modern driver aids it'll look after you better than the older car in a crisis, too. It'll be interesting to see how the Aventador copes on a wet track.

On the road it certainly generates overwhelming attention, which as many supercar owners will confirm is great at first but can become tiring in the long term.

With the imminent return (yes, I know, I've been saying this for months) of the monster-mileage Murciélago, too (see page 121), it looks like the future is bright.

Orange, too... ☒

Simon George
(@bgearexperience)

Date acquired	April 2016
Total mileage	24,023
Mileage this month	566
Costs this month	£0
mpg this month	13.0

END OF TERM

Chevrolet Camaro Z/28

With our steroidal muscle car safely back whence it came, Price hints at what might fill its size-13 shoes

A AS I WRITE THIS THE Z/28 is arriving at Oakland, San Francisco, in a 20-foot container, which brings to an end its extended vacation in Europe – and also its spell in *evo's* Fast Fleet.

But it didn't leave Europe before a close encounter with a wild boar... Shortly after testing the 'Flying Car Mode' on the bump of a railway bridge (the mode is designed to temporarily disable the traction control if one or more wheels get airborne, thus ensuring power isn't being restricted when the wheels make contact with the tarmac again), I was heading uphill in second gear on a winding Swiss road when the boar's path crossed mine. I think we were each as surprised as the other. I braked, it braked, and we stopped inches apart. I thought I'd find tusk marks on the front bumper, but thankfully both car and boar were unscathed. The Z/28's big, carbon-ceramic Brembo brakes had saved the day.

One highlight of the Camaro's time in Europe that I haven't yet had chance to mention was its visit to the Le Mans 24 Hours. Before the race itself I managed to do almost a whole lap of the circuit, as the organisers hadn't yet put in all the barriers. That was pretty special, and the race itself was, needless to say, bloody brilliant. My personal Best Engine Noise prize went to Corvette – although as the Z/28 has a 505bhp 7-litre dry-sumped Vette lump I may be slightly biased! – with Aston Martin coming in



'No breakdowns, no recalls – nothing but speed, power, noise and smiles'

second and everything else tenth.

I had hoped that the Z would arrive in California in time for two summer trips. The first was to the Sonoma Raceway for the NHRA drag races, but sadly it didn't make it back in time for that. A couple of weeks later it was still somewhere in the Panama Canal, so for the second trip – out to the Bonneville Salt Flats – I had to call my modified V8 camper into action. I got 'Salt fever' and it was an extraordinary experience standing in the silent desert heat on what looked like hard-pack snow, then seeing the streak of a 400mph pass before even hearing it. There were fewer spectators than participants, which made it even more special. It was such a shame I couldn't get the Camaro there. Maybe next year. But maybe not in this Z/28...

Why so? Well, throughout its many months in Europe I had no

issues, no breakdowns and no recalls. There was nothing but speed, power, noise and smiles. The car has a Le Mans motor, F1 suspension (well, DSSV monotube dampers, at least), flypaper tyres, carbon-ceramic brakes, Recaro seats, a manual gearbox, supercar performance and a rental-car price. I loved it. And that's why I've put my name down for next year's new Z/28. Ten per cent lighter, ten per cent more power. Apparently it will not be released until it beats the Mustang GT350R. I can't wait. ☒

David Price

Top: Z/28 may not have the polish of its European rivals, but it was a hoot in Europe nonetheless.

Above right: Camaro missed out on a trip to Bonneville, but it did make it to Le Mans



Date acquired	June 2015
Duration of test	12 months
Total test mileage	8041
Overall mpg	15.8
Costs	£876 snow tyres
Purchase price	\$73,300
Value today	\$46,000-56,000





Porsche 911 GT2

With values of the original GT2 going through the roof, Nick Trott contemplates what this means for his later version

I I'VE BEEN DODGING THIS subject, but it keeps being raised. So let's talk Porsches, auctions, market values and the grubby subject of cash.

The £1,848,000 sale (including fees) of a 1995 993 GT2 at a recent RM Sotheby's auction in London raised eyebrows clean off some people's faces. How on Earth, they mused, did it achieve significantly more than double the estimate? Well, I'm guessing two very wealthy bidders wanted it very badly – and all but fought to the death over it. Naturally, this means it's unlikely that the car was bought by a dealer eager to flip it for a quick profit, and so it's probably gone to someone who will love, cherish and hopefully drive the hell out of it. And this makes me happy.

The 993 GT2 was always going to be a high-value Porsche. It's rare (just 194 were built), it was one of the

last air-cooled 911s, it looks suitably berserk and, crucially, it is a true homologation special. Plus when you consider that its racing rivals of the day – F40 LMs and McLaren F1 GTRs – fetch big, big money, perhaps the sale price isn't so absurd after all.

So what, people have asked, does it mean for values of the later (2002) 996 GT2 like mine? I'll be honest – I struggle to care because at present my car isn't for sale and I can't buy anything with the equity within. I paid £90k for it in June 2015 – which still gives me cold sweats – and it's now insured for £145,000.

Is it worth this amount? OK, let's break it down. Yes, the 996 GT2 is rare (circa 1000 built in total, with around 100 of them right-hand drive), but it's not a unicorn like the 993 version. The styling isn't to everyone's taste – not modern enough to tempt people out of the latest GT3s, and not yet 'period'

enough to appeal to the nostalgic buyer. The latter, of course, is also an important factor for those attempting to profit from a purchase: when will the generation who lusted after the car in their teens be in the position to buy one? It's this trend that's pushed the prices of the 205 GT1, and some RS Fords, into the stratosphere over the last 12 months.

Finally, and perhaps crucially, the 996 GT2 wasn't a homologation special. Instead its story is defined by the fact it was the last Porsche without driver aids. This is a factor, no doubt, because Porsche is highly unlikely to build a high-power, two-wheel-drive, turbocharged semi-track car with uncompromising suspension and zero safety net ever again.

In summary, the 996 GT2 has significant upward potential – but I guess you'd expect me to say that.

'The 996 GT2 wasn't a homologation special. Instead its story is defined by the fact it was the last Porsche without driver aids'

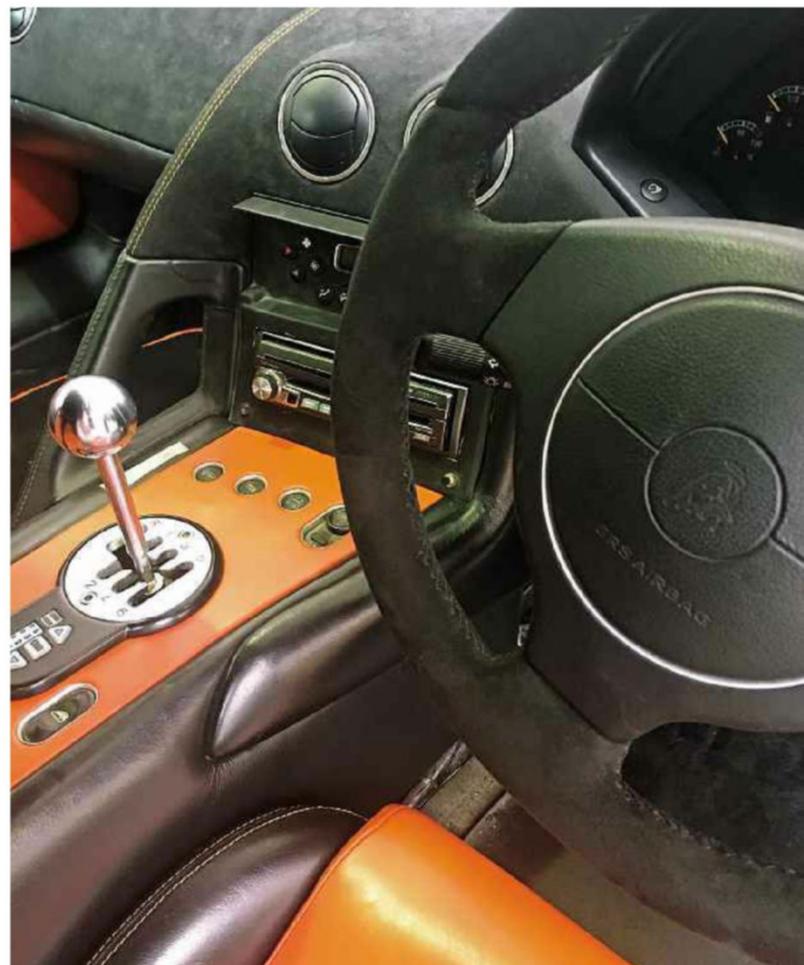
Top: the only way is up? Only time will tell if 996 GT2 values will emulate those of other rare 911s. In the meantime, Trott's just going to enjoy his



Right: steering wheel and dash have been retrimmed in Alcantara; Simon George is looking forward to putting them to the test soon

Lamborghini Murciélago

Its refreshed interior is ready for action, but the mid-mounted V12 is not



However, if it ever reaches the giddy heights of that 993 GT2, I shall eat my (very expensive) hat.

Psychologically, the increasing value of the car hasn't changed me at all. I figure it's insured, it's got a Tracker and it's always securely parked. I don't commute in it anyway and I never leave it at the train station, so my driving habits haven't changed. Most importantly, I still love it and its value doesn't feel like a burden. If and when the latter happens, I'll flog it. Until then, it's a quite magnificent car that best expresses its value in the way it drives. ✕

Nick Trott

Date acquired	June 2015
Total mileage	28,213
Mileage this month	220
Costs this month	£0
mpg this month	19.1

I IT'S BEEN A FRUSTRATING few months for 'Trigger's Broom', which has been struggling with an electrical issue with its engine, thereby delaying its long-awaited return to the road.

Lamborghini's Manchester dealership has therefore become the Murciélago's second home whilst its technicians try to get to the bottom of why the car's once mighty V12 has become a limp V6.

As regular readers will know, the quarter-million-mile Lambo lost an argument with an oak tree back in November 2012 (*evo* 178), which left it (the car, not the tree) damaged way beyond economical repair. Being the sentimental sort, I chose to embark upon a nut and bolt rebuild all the same, and three years later the car has more replacement parts fitted than original, so its nickname has never been more apt!

'Somewhere along its road to recovery the 572bhp V12 has lost a bank of six cylinders'

Somewhat ironically, after the aforementioned catastrophic incident the Murciélago's engine still ran sweetly, but somewhere along its road to recovery the main bus fuse was blown and the 572bhp V12 lost a bank of six cylinders. Electrical gremlins can take many hours to nail down in Italian supercars, and despite changing all the ECUs and investigating myriad other theories, the problem has not yet been solved. Now a systematic

testing of every part of the wiring loom is in progress, so hopefully I'll hear some good news – and the sound of 12 cylinders running smoothly – soon.

On a more positive note, the Lambo's interior has recently been refreshed and updated by having the dashboard and steering wheel re-covered in Alcantara. It really looks the part and will hopefully reduce the reflections in the Murciélago's huge windscreen.

I look forward to finding out shortly, not least because my goal is to hit 300,000 miles by the end of 2017. More news soon. ✕

Simon George
(@6gearexperience)

Date acquired	September 2004
Total mileage	258,098
Mileage this month	0
Costs this month	TBC
mpg this month	n/a



END OF TERM

Volkswagen Golf R

VW's four-wheel-drive megahatch is now a common sight on UK roads. Are we surprised? Not at all

IT ARRIVED IN SEPTEMBER 2015. In the 13 months that followed, our Golf R covered 32,000 miles, finished second in a hot hatch group test, starred in a drag-race video, supported on innumerable photoshoots (including our most recent **evo** Car of the Year test), lapped countless circuits, undertook so many dawn raids to Heathrow that it could find its own way there, and was driven – hard, of course – on what feels like every single mile of picturesque moorland road the United Kingdom has to offer.

It became part of the **evo** family. In fact, its particular set of skills and attributes made it so well suited to life on our Fast Fleet that losing it felt quite like a bereavement – although the arrival of another rapid Golf in its

place will ease the pain somewhat. But we'll get to that next month.

The Golf R isn't the fastest hot hatch or the most exciting to drive, but none other combines all-weather ability, long-distance refinement, urban usability and back-road fun quite like the VW. And while it might not steal your heart over a 15-minute test drive, it will dig so far beneath your skin during the first three or four weeks of ownership that you won't want to ever do without it.

It was a slow burner, then. While at first it seemed effective but fairly unremarkable, given a little time we soon started to appreciate its crisp steering, its responsive and eager turbo engine, its neutral chassis balance, its very darty front axle and the remarkable way in which

its dampers seemed to iron out a broken road surface. I suppose the word that best describes the Golf R is 'quality'.

During those 32,000 miles we went through two sets of Bridgestone Potenza S001 tyres (which aren't as grippy in the dry as the hot hatch tyre of the moment, Michelin's Pilot Super Sport, but are far superior in wet and cold conditions) and the car had just the single service, which set us back £329. Impressively, and despite being shown very little mercy on trackdays, in drag races and on photoshoots, the R didn't throw up a single mechanical or electrical issue. A faint whining sound did emanate from the transmission a couple of months into the car's life on the Fast Fleet, but it didn't develop into

anything more troubling during the months that followed.

The Golf R has a very natural rival in the shape of the Ford Focus RS, and it's a rivalry that we were only too happy to prod. The two cars went head-to-head in **evo** 220 on the roads of Montserrat, close to Barcelona, and although it was the RS that came out on top, the outcome was far closer than we ever could have imagined (the third car in the test, incidentally, was an Audi RS3 and it was no better than an also-ran on that occasion).

'The Golf sounds great and as an ownership proposition I can completely understand why some would prefer its subtler charms and more Germanic cabin over the Ford,' wrote Henry Catchpole. 'But although its chassis can be



'The Golf R will dig so far beneath your skin during the first three or four weeks of ownership that you won't want to ever do without it'

grabbed by the scruff and made to work into and out of a corner with real grace, it feels like a bit more effort for a little less reward than in the Ford.' That seems like a fair summary to me: the Golf the more grown up, more rounded everyday car, the Focus the – marginally – more entertaining one to drive on an inviting stretch of road.

The two met once again on the drag strip for an *evo* YouTube video. With 345bhp to the Golf's 296bhp, it seemed fairly obvious that the Focus would walk it. Indeed, it was half a second quicker to 60mph, recording an impressive time of 4.7 seconds. The half-mile time, however, told a slightly different story, with just two tenths separating the pair in the Ford's favour. Taking the artifice of a standing start out of the equation

showed that the Golf is every bit as quick in a straight line as the Focus.

Given my time with the Golf R again I'd spec it a little differently. I'd choose a three-door shell and a bolder paint colour, plus 19-inch wheels (lead chassis engineer Karsten Schebsdat told me his preference is for these bigger wheels, with Dynamic Chassis Control dampers). Perhaps surprisingly, I'd spec the DSG transmission, too. The twin-clutch unit suits the R's more mature driving style, I reckon, and the manual gearbox can be a frustrating one with a lumpy, clumsy clutch re-engagement on upshifts.

In just about every other respect, though, the Golf R was a brilliant car to live with. It's a very easy one to recommend, too. ☒

Dan Prosser (@TheDanProsser)

Above left: leather cabin was a cosy environment to which we added the Discover Pro satnav (£1765), rear side airbags (£275), heated seats (£250), advanced telephone connection (£320) and the superb Dynaudio sound system (£535)

Date acquired	September 2015
Duration of test	13 months
Total test mileage	32,000
Overall mpg	31.2
Costs	£359 four tyres £329 major service
Purchase price	£36,880
Value today	£21,000-23,000



Vauxhall VXR8 GTS

There's lots to love about Vauxhall's supersaloon, but where does it fall short?

I I HAVE BEEN ALMOST entirely positive about the VXR8 so far. I think that's a fair reflection of my time with the car but maybe I should mention The Bad Stuff. Such as the side mirrors. Wow, they're bad. Tiny, with super-magnified glass and just giving a distorted view of the world. I cannot – ever – reverse into a parking bay straight. Not even close to straight. It's weird and sounds rather inconsequential but it's also massively annoying.

Equally irksome is the VXR8's constant paranoia that I'm about to drive into something. It gives you a beeping alert should it think you've missed the parked car 100 metres ahead, or the truck heading your way on a narrow road. Another minor gripe but now every time it bursts into life I find myself swearing under my breath like teenager might at an overprotective parent: 'Leave me alone! I know what I'm doing!'

Then there's the crappy radio reception, the timewarp satnav display and, of course, the fuel consumption. It's bad. I've tried driving slowly, tickling the throttle, turning off the air con... but the result is always seventeen point something. I know the VXR8 GTS is all about that massive engine but somehow fuel consumption in the 17s is a bit depressing. I could tolerate 21, maybe even 20mpg, but the sheer amount of time I spend pouring fuel into the thing eventually wears away the enthusiasm.

Even so, and as you can tell from the mainly tiny annoyances, life with the VXR8 GTS is still pretty good. I really enjoy its sheer rear-wheel drivenness. In the dry I tend to turn the traction control off. Not to drive around at 45 degrees to the road's

'It's superbly trustworthy and very consistent in everything it does, but it still feels slightly unnatural and wickedly naughty'

intended direction but because to do so is to feel the full shock and awe of the VXR8. Engine pulling and pulling with the supercharger whine growing ever more intense, that excellent turn-in precision and then the feeling that you can finesse the car's line with throttle inputs. It's fantastic. For a car of this size, weight and power it's superbly trustworthy and very consistent in everything it does, but it still feels slightly unnatural and wickedly naughty.

Having said that, if it's raining I tend to keep the traction control very much on. That supercharged 6.2-litre V8 really does have a lot of power – it feels good for every one of its 576bhp – and the way it'll suddenly light-up its tyres over a crest at big speeds in the wet can feel alarming. Think I'd better check those rear tyres. **X**

Jethro Bovingdon

Date acquired	June 2016
Total mileage	18,110
Mileage this month	1850
Costs this month	£0
mpg this month	17.4

Peugeot 308 GTi 270 by PS

Some things are best kept simple, reckons photographer Dean Smith. And heater controls are one of them

MY NORMAL PRE-DRIVE routine on a chilly autumn or winter morning goes as follows: unlock car, get in, start car, set climate control to something warmer than it was set to the previous night, and should the car have heated seats, set the driver's one to 'Incinerate'.

However, when it's the 308 I've just climbed into, that routine isn't quite so straightforward. You see, you can't just turn a knob or press a button to operate the climate control. Oh no, how 'old fashioned' and ridiculously simple would that be. Instead, the 308's climate control is operated via the car's touchscreen infotainment system, which sometimes – and this is no exaggeration – takes over 60 seconds to boot up. That seems like an absolute age when you just want to get on your way.

So what about when the system is finally up and running? Even then the arrangement feels compromised. What should be an intuitive jab or twist to change the temperature or fan speed instead requires far too much of your attention as you change to the appropriate display and poke at the virtual buttons – an activity that's always weirdly difficult when you're on the move.

I can see why Peugeot has done it – a lower button count equals a cleaner cabin and pennies saved – but the result is an unnecessary distraction, plain and simple.

Another button that's missing is one for the parking sensors. I can't think of another car that doesn't have a way to disable the beeping for when you don't need it. For example, when your nine-month-old baby has *finally* started to drift off and you happen to need to reverse.



'What should be an intuitive jab or twist instead requires far too much of your attention'

But enough of the griping. Next month we'll focus on some of the 308's many positives. Promise. ✘
Dean Smith (@evoDeanSmith)

Date acquired	July 2016
Total mileage	8667
Mileage this month	1669
Costs this month	£0
mpg this month	37.1

Volkswagen Golf GTI Mk2

After further testing, on road and now on track, the upgrades are still a hit

SINCE MY LAST REPORT on the Mk2 (evo 225), I've been putting the recent round of upgrades through their paces on both road and track, and I'm very pleased to report that my GTI is turning out to be a delightful all-round package and a brilliant drivers' car – even more so than it already was.

On the road it now feels solid and strong, as if every nut and screw on the entire car has been tightened. The ST XTA suspension, PowerFlex bushes and new tie-rod ends have transformed the ride and steering

feel. Getting the camber and toe adjusted to perfection and raising the car a little from its previous stance mean that it feels stable and flat while being untroubled by even the bumpiest B-roads. The steering feedback and response, meanwhile, are shockingly different – I thought the steering was good before but now it's incredibly pointy and direct.

On track the fun triples and the car is a complete animal. Well, a 145bhp animal... The Yokohama Advan Neova AD08R tyres offer all the grip I could want and work brilliantly with the upgraded anti-roll bars. I now have the confidence to carry more speed into a corner and let the tyres do the work.

Being able to carry more speed and confidently brake later means I can work the 16-valve 1.8-litre engine harder than ever. It really does sound fantastic revving out to just over 7000rpm down the long straight at the Bedford Autodrome.



I'm now amazed every time I drive this car, and find it so much fun that I just can't wait to get back in it. It's safe to say that the upgrades have been a resounding success! ✘

Aston Parrott (@AstonParrott)

Date acquired	April 2012
Total mileage	179,754
Mileage this month	180
Costs this month	£0
mpg this month	24.0

Caterham Racer

END OF TERM

As Dan Prosser hangs up his Caterham race suit, he wonders whether there's any better way to get into competitive motorsport



THE CATERHAM motorsport ladder is unique. The basic premise is that a total novice can buy a Seven for £24,995 and enter the Caterham Academy, then progress year-on-year through the Roadsport, Tracksport and Supersport categories before eventually reaching the top-level series, Superlight R300-S.

The upgrades from one series to the next are designed to improve the car's handling rather than straight-line performance, the idea being that the driver's skill set will improve as the car becomes grippier and more agile. The final, R300-S series requires drivers to chop in the car that has served them since the Academy and buy a new machine, which introduces a sequential gearbox and a screaming 200bhp engine. Incidentally, the R300-S is reckoned to be the fastest non-aero racing car out there.

Across five weekends during 2016, I climbed my way up the Caterham motorsport ladder to get a taste

'The fastest Academy cars were being driven with a level of skill that belied the fact the drivers are rookies'

of the racing it offers. You can read my reports from each race weekend in previous issues; in this 'end of term' report I want to share some of my findings, starting with the atmosphere in the paddock, which was unfailingly brilliant. The Caterham staff and rival competitors were helpful, friendly and fun, which was a welcome change to certain other race series, where the atmosphere can be spiky.

Secondly, the driving standards were generally very high in every one of the Caterham series. There was always somebody to race,

regardless of your experience level, and the guys at the front of the grid were pedalling their cars more or less as quickly as they would go. In fact, the fastest Academy cars were being driven with a level of skill and commitment that belied the fact that the drivers were rookies.

The third thing to note was the size of the leap from Roadsport to Tracksport. Having been able to run with the front of the Roadsport field, scoring a podium at Anglesey, I couldn't qualify off the back row of the grid on my two Tracksport outings. With most drivers being run by professional teams from the Tracksport series onwards, whereas previously they would run their own cars, this is where they start to take things seriously with multiple test days and driver coaches – both things I was (naively) trying to make do without.

The importance of professional tuition really hit home during my final weekend, at Croft in the R300-S series. Having been roundly shown up in Tracksport, I expected to be

even further off the pace, but some expert coaching from Karl Goshawk helped me qualify 12th out of 18 cars and finish in eighth position in the second race. If you're going racing, do yourself a favour and employ the services of a driver coach.

Finally, I must comment on how effective the Caterham motorsport ladder is at nurturing a driver's skills. I could scarcely believe how well some of the Roadsport competitors – in just their second year of racing, remember – were driving, and the level of skill improved dramatically with each series. Climbing the ladder is, I'm convinced, the best and most cost-effective way to go from complete novice to experienced hand in five short years. ❏

Dan Prosser (@TheDanProsser)

Date acquired	April 2016
Duration of test	Six months
Total test mileage	Five race weekends
Overall mpg	Not a lot...
Costs	n/a
Purchase price	£24,995
Value today	n/a

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Eleven-thousand miles into Fast Fleet service and the Audi has developed its first real problem. Thing is, it's nothing to do with the RS6

Audi RS6 Performance



D DROP THE DEAD DONKEY! (Younger readers, go and ask your parents.) I have found a fault with the RS6 and the impenetrable Teutonic armour of Audi Sport's rocket-powered family car has finally been breached.

Actually, that's not quite true. What has happened is nothing to do with KU16 MRX, rather a third-party supplier has let it down: Pirelli.

After 11,000 miles the standard-fit 21-inch P Zeros have 'gone off'. Yes, it all sounds a bit F1, but rather than disintegrating, the RS6's tyres feel like they have hardened to the point that they are nibbling away at the ride. Less of a nibble, more a good

'Yes, it all sounds a bit F1, but rather than disintegrating, the RS6's tyres feel like they have hardened'

mouthful, in fact. At first I thought a balancing weight had worked loose, but there was no vibration you'd associate with such an event. Rather there's a low-frequency vibration through the steering wheel and, I'm informed, through the rear seat.

Photographer Dean Smith first picked up on it when he borrowed the car for a week away. He described it as a 'patter from the front end'. Initially I put this down to his fastidious attention to detail and sensitive digits (and in no way to his incessant moaning about every car ever built), but after wrestling the keys back off him, I noticed it too.

A tyre-pressure check highlighted nothing untoward. Tread levels are no lower than 4 to 3.5mm across the carcass and there is no sign of any wheel weights dropping off. I've experienced something similar before with cars running Pirelli tyres: after a period of time and distance

the rubber loses its suppleness and seem to harden and add a harshness to the ride quality. There's still plenty of grip available and there are no negative effects to the car's handling. It's just an unexpected frustration. A bit like the email from Audi confirming it will be collecting the RS6 at the end of the month. Which is a far bigger issue. ❌

Stuart Gallagher
(@stuartg917)

Date acquired	June 2016
Total mileage	11,225
Mileage this month	1262
Costs this month	£0
mpg this month	22.5

Kia Proceed GT



Kia Proceed GT

Attractive, capable and comfortable, but what the Kia really needs now is a sprinkling of sparkle

T THE KIA CONTINUES TO prove its worth by slotting almost imperceptibly into the routine of anyone who cares to take it from the **evo** car park. And everyone comes back with the same kind words: neat handling, great ergonomics (from common-sense switchgear placement to pedals aligned well for heel-and-toe gearchanges) and sharp looks.

And each time I nod and smile in agreement, wondering to myself whether I'm being unkind on the Proceed for increasingly finding it a bit... boring.

That's not to undermine anyone else's fondness for the car. It undoubtedly drives well, the cabin really is a high point, and as the nights draw in, the Kia's yellow paintwork does look fantastic

during the 'golden hour' each morning and evening.

What it lacks is any real flavour. While the Proceed is admirably free of flaws, it's equally devoid of any standout features.

I understand why: the Proceed GT is Kia's first attempt at a hot hatchback and very much a brand-building exercise. Making a car that excels in one area or another risks alienating customers who don't value those characteristics – stripping out the rear seats and giving it Cup 2s that only really work when it's dry might make it more exciting, but they'd also significantly narrow the car's audience.

It's a bit like choosing to eat at a chain restaurant rather than the family-run place down the road. You're assured of consistent

quality and decent pricing but the experience is unlikely to be memorable. The family-run restaurant may be a little more expensive and you'll hear the chef shouting at the waitress, but the owner will remember your name and the food will keep you coming back for years to come.

We now know Kia can make a good car, one that whiles away the miles and doesn't cost the earth to run – but so can all of its rivals. Now it needs to make one that'll keep you coming back for more. ❌

Antony Ingram (@evoAntony)

Date acquired	December 2015
Total mileage	16,707
Mileage this month	1588
Costs this month	£0
mpg this month	30.8

Mazda MX-5 2.0

END OF TERM

We know it's fun in small doses, but how does an MX-5 stack up for everyday use? After a year with ours, we have the answer

I T'S FUNNY HOW WE GET attached to certain cars but others are completely forgotten. In the case of the MX-5, I don't think I'll ever forget running it. This was a car that really got under my skin, one that became more enjoyable with every single drive.

Small, light and with just enough space for my girlfriend and me, it was an absolute joy to run for the last 12 months. Standard on our 2-litre Sport Nav model were 17-inch wheels, Bilstein dampers, rain-sensing wipers, adaptive LED headlights, cruise control, rear parking sensors, keyless entry, a 7-inch touchscreen display, satnav, DAB and a nine-speaker Bose sound system. Plus a limited-slip differential, naturally.

It proved to be a good spec, and the car was faultless, with not a single reliability issue arising during its hard life at *evo*. There were just two warning lights: the first was to remind us that the tyres might need changing (they did), the second for the first service, due at 12,500 miles and which we didn't quite get around to having carried out before the car went back to Mazda.

Despite numerous trackdays the MX-5 was still on its original brake pads, which showed minimal wear, when it left. Just one of the benefits of a 1000kg kerb weight. Fuel economy was pretty good, too, the



'As a package it was about as affordable and fun as they come'

MX-5 rarely dipping below 30mpg, so as a package it was about as affordable *and* fun as they come. It also made my BMW E46 M3 feel like a tank, while the ability to quickly pop the roof open with one hand was a real boon.

But on to the drawbacks. We mentioned the setup issues repeatedly – it was just a bit too soft for us – although I'm convinced (and aftermarket tuner BBR has

shown this) that a bit of money spent on springs and dampers can result in a significant improvement. The cabin, meanwhile, was Lotus Elise-cramped but without that car's (in my humble opinion) super-comfy seats. Put simply, long journeys in the MX-5 weren't great for my lower back or bum.

Of course, the MX-5 is a drivers' car, not a long-range cruiser, and ultimately its qualities as such shone through. It comfortably beat Fiat's new 124 Spider in a head-to-head in *evo* 228, coming across as by far the more genuine competitor.

Although we ran the 2-litre MX-5, which has 158bhp, there is also a 1.5-litre version with 129bhp. Having driven both, we wouldn't hesitate to recommend the 1.5-litre car, too, not

least for its great thirst for revs.

After a year of living with a fourth-generation Mazda MX-5, we can still recommend it highly. It didn't miss a beat whatever we threw at it, from big drives with an extra bag attached to the bootlid, to trackday thrashings, where it was properly good fun. If there's only two of you and you fancy of a sports car, have a word with your Mazda dealer. **x**

Hunter Skipworth
(@HunterSkipworth)

Date acquired	October 2015
Duration of test	12 months
Total test mileage	13,344
Overall mpg	33.6
Costs	£228.4 four tyres
Purchase price	£23,835
Value today	£17,000-18,500

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ISSUE 231

ON SALE WEDNESDAY 28 DECEMBER

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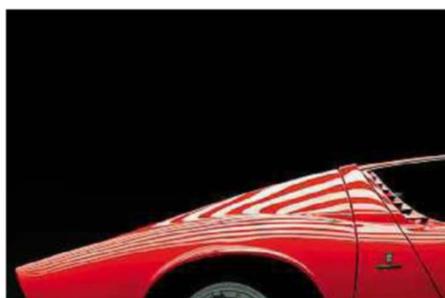
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*Compared to a standard OSRAM halogen bulb

ESSENTIALS

THE ROUND-UP

New motoring products that have caught our eye this month



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No prizes for guessing which car this Bertone-designed rump belongs to, nor why this print from Teej is named the way it is. The simple image goes hand-in-hand with previous prints of the Porsche 911, Alfa Romeo Montreal and Ford GT. It's printed on 13 x 19in lustre paper and each print is signed by the photographer.

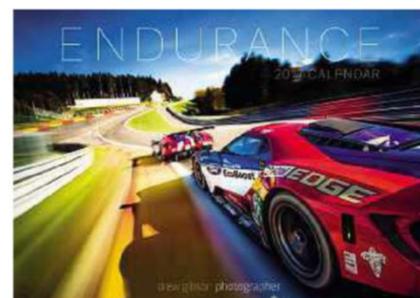


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Another iconic car makes an appearance on this T-shirt, available in sizes small to XXL. Bond's DB5 may be even more famous but it didn't have the party trick of the Lotus Esprit from *The Spy Who Loved Me* – a car Tesla CEO Elon Musk now owns and plans to turn into an actual submarine...



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With classic Porsche values still soaring, this is pretty much the only way you'll get your hands on a 356 these days. Presented in 'Outlaw' flavour, it's one of a series released in conjunction with Porsche restorer and modifier Magnus Walker. If you can find them, others include a 997 GT3, a 964 and a 935.



BOOK

Porsche Victory 2016
€ 40

gruppe-verlag.de

In English, German and French text, this book covers Porsche's success at the 2016 Le Mans 24 Hours – a victory snatched in the final few minutes from Toyota in one of the most dramatic finishes to the race ever. The GT class cars are detailed too, with interviews, statistics and more.



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Market

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ANALYSIS: AFFORDABLE PORSCHES

Rocketing prices for air-cooled 911s have dragged up the rest of the Porsche market, but there are still some gems below £30k by **Adam Towler**

THE AFFORDABLE PORSCHE: an overambitious oxymoron, or the summit of ownership dreaming for many an *evo* reader? Either way, one thing is beyond doubt: this is a very different story to tell today compared with, say, just five years ago.

That's entirely because of the amazing growth in values experienced by the classic-Porsche market. Where once the used-Porsche buyer with up to £30,000 to spend would have enjoyed an almost



'If you want a classic Porsche within budget, you're most likely to go for one of the front-engined, transaxle cars'



limitless choice of variants, today a large chunk of that selection is simply off the menu – £30,000 no longer buys you an early, pre-'73 911 with chrome bumpers, or a rare Carrera 3.0. It won't even get you a ubiquitous 3.2 Carrera, and you'll struggle to buy that most hardy and for so long the entry-level used 911, the SC, built from 1978 to 1983.

As Roly Baldwin of Porsche sales and servicing specialist Eporsch says, 'Any air-cooled 911 below £30,000 will have a story attached. It might be a Cat C or D, it might need a lot of work, or it might be a 2.7-litre car from the 1970s [for so long the least desirable 911s of all]. They might be cars with 200,000 miles on the clock, or, if 964s, cheap Tiptronic or Cabriolet cars.'

In short, while it's not impossible to find air-cooled cars in this price bracket, you'll need to look very, very carefully at any potential purchase. Remember, a rotten, tired 911 is a

very expensive restoration project.

So, if you do want a classic Porsche within budget, you're most likely to go for one of the front-engined, transaxle cars. The 924, 944, 968 and 928 have all been experiencing a growth in values recently, feeding off the back of 911 prices and the classic car boom in general.

Where once Porsche ownership via a 924 began for mere hundreds of pounds, now anything tidy will set you back a few thousand. The V8-engined 928 is in its own niche, and we'll look at this in a later issue. Meanwhile, there are plenty of 944s out there, from the simple charms of an eight-valve Lux to the highly rated 944 Turbo (pictured above), the latter having quadrupled in value in some cases. It's hard to beat a good 944 S2, though, at £10,000-plus, or later Sport-spec 968s for £20,000.

It's worth bearing in mind that the majority of these cars have been worth very little for years, if not

decades, and many will have been run on a tiny budget. A match-fit 944 is an inspiring car, but a tired one is very little fun at all.

Then there's the modern era of Porsche, 1996-2016: 20 years of drivers' cars with naturally aspirated, water-cooled flat-sixes and built in large numbers, too. There's a car for all budgets here, from an early 986

Boxster at £3500 to four-year-old 981 Boxsters that are just beginning to appear around £30,000. In between are the 911s, those terrific 996 (below) and gen-one 997 Carreras.

We dealt with the latter in Model Focus last month. It's a brilliant car, a former eCoty winner in 'S' form, and still as handsome, useable and thrilling to drive as ever. However,



FOUR TO BUY



PORSCHE BOXSTER (981)
£29,995

This 63-plate car with 32,000 miles is typical of the 981s within our chosen budget. It's a high-spec car, too. Finished in black with black leather and optional 20in 'satin' wheels, there's also a Sport Design steering wheel amongst other options. And it's a manual.

CRIDFORDS 01483 273302



PORSCHE 911 CARRERA 4 (996.2)
£17,995

This smart gen-two 996 with the 3.6-litre engine is Basalt Black metallic with an unusual Terracotta leather interior. The car has a manual gearbox, has only done 61,000 miles and has a full history. It's a lot of car for the money, as they say.

EPORSCH 01483 799245



PORSCHE BOXSTER S (986)
£5995

This is where the real value is: this early, 1999 example of the S-spec Boxster, in original 986 form, looks very tidy for its age. It has covered 112,000 miles – supported by a full service history – is finished in Zenith Blue and still wears the period 'fried egg' headlamps.

EPORSCH 01483 799245



PORSCHE 911 CARRERA (997.1)
£29,995

This is an unusually high spec for a 997 Carrera: there's a factory aerokit, heated black leather sports seats, 19-inch Turbo wheels, a sports exhaust and xenon headlights, and its only done 44,000 miles. Top money for a 3.6, but it's not hard to see why.

FINLAY GORHAM PORSCHE 01284 827427

it is also a car that's gained an unfortunate reputation for engine issues, and its general maintenance costs can rack up extremely quickly. Don't dismiss them, but do go into ownership with your eyes open.

Finding more favour now is the 996 Carrera, which if you've got £10,000-20,000 is right in range. That's more than a little ironic, because the poor old 996 has spent many a year in the doldrums. Roly Baldwin again: 'They had their detractors when they were new, but engine problems are much rarer than people think. They're useable, quick, comfortable – a fantastic car.'

You can still just buy a 996 Carrera for £10,000, but you'll need £15,000 for a really nice 3.4-litre manual coupe, and closer to £20,000 for a 3.6-litre gen-two. Meanwhile, the best 996 Carrera 4S examples can stretch to £30,000.

The broadest range of possibilities materialises with the mid-engined cars: 986 Boxsters start at a few thousand pounds and rise in price by generation, and by variant, until at the £30,000 mark the first 981 Boxsters are beginning to appear. 987 Caymans, too, are very tempting, starting now at just over £10,000 for an early 2.7-litre car.

SUMMARY

The goalposts may have moved, but there's still an array of Porsches available for less than £30k. To whittle it down, it's probably wisest to consider budget first, then whether you want a metal roof or not, and also if you want a classic or something with modern performance. There are still plenty of classic Porsches within budget, just not the air-cooled staples of yore. Buy a good one and you'll be living with a legend; buy badly and it'll cost you.

Otherwise, it's into the modern-classic or nearly new market. Many of the earlier water-cooled Porsches from the last 20 years are trapped between being just another old performance car and a classic, but they'll probably never be any cheaper, and they offer a driving experience quite different – in a good way – to Porsche's current offerings.



EXPERT VIEW

ROLY BALDWIN

Eporsch
eporsch.co.uk

'The growth in values of front-engined, transaxle cars and 911s such as the 996 is because of the vacuum created by the rise in air-cooled Porsche prices. People still want an old Porsche, so this is what's now available. You do need to be very careful with cars like the 944; the rust repairs can get very expensive. And we don't sell so many 997s. We'd never take one in without giving it a very, very close lookover first.'

'There's something for everyone with the Boxster. A low-mileage early car can scrub up really well, but as the cars are so cheap, few spend the money on maintaining them. Engine failures are rarer than people think, and if it does let go you can always get a second-hand engine, but it's still easy to spend £4000 putting it right. The early Caymans are starting to show their age now, but they're still very desirable, with £10,000-15,000 your starting point.'

'I BOUGHT ONE'

SIMON ROWLEY

Porsche 911 Carrera (997.1)

'I loved the steering, the engine sound at high revs, the cross-country pace and the usability of my 997. The whole feeling of driving a 911 made me smile. It did feel almost too good at times – it was hard to exploit its full potential.'

MICHAEL WATKINS

Cridfords
cridfords.co.uk

'At just under £30,000 you'll be getting a fabulous 2.7-litre 981 Boxster. We've seen no faults with them at all so far and the car will look like it's just driven out of a Porsche showroom – except it'll sound better than the new one!'

'Many want the manual gearbox with these, but both 'boxes command similar money. If you do get a PDK make sure it has the Sport Chrono pack [for its sportier gearshift strategy], and if you want to drive using the paddles, get one with the Sport Design steering wheel [the standard PDK wheel has buttons].'

'I'd also consider the specials at the end of gen-one 987 production: the Boxster RS60 and the Cayman S Sport. These are great cars, but hard to find.'

'I love the 986 Boxster S, too, especially the Anniversary models at £10,000-12,000. The challenge with all these cars is to find one owned by a real enthusiast.'

SPECIALIST

JOFF WARD

Finlay Gorham Porsche

'Build quality took a drop between 996 and 997. We do buy the 3.6-litre 997 Carrera in when we can, as they're cracking cars and give less trouble than the 3.8 S. The trouble is, customers all want the S model, whatever we say.'



RS MANIA AT NEC CLASSIC AUCTION

Silverstone Auctions' recent NEC Classic Motor Show sale proved demand for modern classics remains strong. A pair of 'Flatnose' Porsche 930 Turbos sold for over £200,000 apiece, but it was low-mileage RS Fords that stole the show. An Escort Cosworth reached £40,500, an Escort RS Turbo (pictured) £30,375, and a Fiesta RS Turbo £19,688.



U.S. CAR MAKERS TURN TO TRUMP

American car manufacturers have seen Donald Trump's election victory as an opportunity to renegotiate future vehicle regulations. The Alliance of Automobile Manufacturers says that the current restrictive rules drive up vehicle costs and wants the White House to set more easily achievable mpg and emissions targets for 2022 and beyond.



CHEVETTE HS STARS IN DECEMBER SALE

Classic Car Auctions' last sale of the year will take place on 3 December at the Warwickshire Exhibition Centre, with almost 100 cars going under the hammer. Highlights include a Ford Sierra Cosworth RS500, the first Vauxhall Chevette HS off the line (pictured), and two Subaru Impreza PIs expected to sell for less than £12,000 each.



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- Speed Yellow
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Porsche 911 3.0 Targa

- Carrera
- White
- Targa



Porsche 993 RS

- In Stock Now
- RHD
- Midnight Blue

USED RIVALS: PARED-BACK SPORTS COUPES

by Adam Towler



PORSCHE 911 CARRERA RS (993)

Engine	Flat-six, 3746cc
Power	296bhp @ 6500rpm
Torque	262lb ft @ 5400rpm
Weight	1270kg (237bhp/ton)
0-60mph	5.0sec (claimed)
Top speed	172mph (claimed)
On sale	1995-1996
evo rating	★★★★★

'I BOUGHT ONE'

'Every time I use the car I'm reminded how perfect the dynamics are. Each of the factory upgrades over the standard 993 seems modest but they are many and well considered. Overall the specification is a wonderful blend of superb trackday performance and exhilarating real-world capability. As an air-cooled swansong, it's glorious.' **Paul Madden**

EXAMPLES

1995 £249,000

The Supercar Rooms



Two previous owners and 53,000km. Comes with a Fabspeed sports exhaust and in loud Speed Yellow.

BUYING ADVICE

'Watch for non-standard suspension – it can be too crashy and very expensive to revert back to standard. Track rods have rubber dampers that wear and cause wandering and also front-end vibration at speed. Look for corrosion around the wheelarches and the front and rear window surrounds, and check the car has the wiring-loom update for the engine and no oil leaks from the lower – plastic – rocker covers.'

Mikey Wastie, autofarm.co.uk



HONDA NSX-R (NA1)

Engine	V6, 2977cc
Power	276bhp @ 7300rpm
Torque	217lb ft @ 5400rpm
Weight	1230kg (248bhp/ton)
0-60mph	4.8sec (claimed)
Top speed	163mph (claimed)
On sale	1992-1995
evo rating	★★★★★

'Out of the seven NSXs I've owned, two have been NSX-Rs – an NA1, which I then sold and bought my current NA2. I prefer the interior on the NA1, with its Alcantara dashboard and door cards, but the changes to the engine, gearbox and aerodynamics do make the later car feel more planted and urgent. Both have a firm ride.' **Neil Shaw**

1996 £160,000

Plans Performance



This 47,500-mile NA1 has been converted to UK spec and is wearing new Yokohama AD08s.

'They only made 483 NA1 NSX-Rs, so they don't come up for sale often. There is only a handful in the UK, and we've sold the vast majority. Values have been appreciating strongly over the past few years, but the cars remain good value compared with a Ferrari. The most desirable spec for these is Championship White with the black Alcantara Recaros. Air con was an option, and there were many changes on the cars over standard.'

Graham Horgan, nsxuk.com



LOTUS ESPRIT SPORT 300

Engine	In-line 4-cyl, 2174cc, turbocharged
Power	300bhp @ 6400rpm
Torque	287lb ft @ 4400rpm
Weight	1243g (245bhp/ton)
0-60mph	4.7sec (claimed)
Top speed	161mph (claimed)
On sale	1992-1995
evo rating	★★★★★

'I had mine for four years but sold it for an Evora 400. I'd love to buy another: the acceleration was ferocious, and it was such an intimate car to drive – it really shrank around you. Running it was not cheap. It wasn't unreliable but you have to love them. Most of all, it was a drivers' car through and through.' **Phil Bull**

1994 £29,950

Shirley's Garage



We couldn't find a 300 for sale right now, but this 47k-mile S4 GT has 264bhp and is one of 11.

'Based on the X180R racer, the Esprit Sport 300 really was a race car for the road. Out of the 64 built, just 23 were supplied to the UK market. It's well worth checking the age and condition of the tyres, as the original Goodyear GS-C is no longer available. Check, as well, for ABS problems, which unfortunately are common to all Esprits. Other than that, being such a collectable car it should be in AI condition.'

'Bibs', thelotusforums.com

THE EVO CHOICE

Three different approaches to building a physical manifestation of the thrill of driving, and if any were at our disposal you wouldn't hear any complaints.

Arguably the Lotus would be the hardest to hang on to. While it's one of the very best Esprits, its mechanicals and drivetrain are tricky to engage with

and there would always be a question mark over its reliability. When new it was a thoroughbred, but it's probably best put out to pasture today.

The Carrera RS: the finest incarnation of the air-cooled 911? For some, quite possibly, for it's a remarkable drivers' car. If you can buy one.

The NSX-R sits between the Lotus and Porsche, matching exclusivity with motorsport pedigree. An icon, a former eCoty winner (in NA2 form) and one of the purest, most rewarding driving experiences there is – it's our choice.

Stuart Gallagher



BUYING JOURNEY

PETER JENKS



From Prefect to Plus 8, an *evo* reader shares his car history



1st

1970
**Ford 107E
Prefect (1960)**

'My first car. Bought as I started my second year at university. It cost £50 and came complete with conspicuous rust.'

4th

1987
**Alfa Romeo 33
1.7 QV (1986)**

'After two more Suds, I discovered torque-steer with this Alfa. I kept it for ten years and 100,000 miles. No rust, and the only thing that failed was the water pump.'

2nd

1974
**Hillman Hunter
(1970)**

'After a second Prefect, complete with a 1198cc Anglia Super engine, I bought the positively luxurious Hunter. It had no redeeming features whatsoever.'



3rd

1978
**Alfa Romeo
Alfasud (1975)**

'The start of a long Alfa infatuation. Cornered like nothing I'd ever driven. Lacked torque though, hence very thirsty.'



What else?

It's Peter's Alfa Romeo era – an unbroken 27 years – that defines his buying journey. In addition to the cars listed here, there was a second Sud in 1979, a feisty 1.3Ti with 85bhp, while in 1981 that was traded-in for a brand-new 1500cc Sud with twin Webers and nearly 100bhp. In 1998 a 156 replaced the 'horrible' 145. Peter kept this until 2005, whereupon a lack of a good local dealer called time on the relationship.

In the meantime he'd inherited his dad's much-loved 1991 Mercedes 190 2.6 Sport Auto, complete with limited-slip diff and Sportline suspension. He ended up keeping that car for 17 years.

An SLK, a Range Rover Evoque and an xDrive BMW 3-series estate have all come and gone, too, though they all failed to make the right kind of impression.

What next?

'I'm thinking electric – Panamera Hybrid or Tesla Model S,' says Peter. 'It needs to be quick, fun to drive and comfortable, and a bit leftfield. Oh, and I would quite like a Morgan 3 Wheeler, too.'

evo tip

It'd be 'ludicrous' not to consider the formidable Tesla, but there's a new Panamera S Hybrid on the way that'll be worth a look.

5th

1997
**Alfa Romeo
145 QV (1997)**

'Horrible. Based on the Fiat Tipo and drove like a bus. The driving position was so upright. Buying it was a big mistake.'



6th

2005
**Audi TT quattro
225 (2003)**

'The kids were growing up, so it was time to go back to a three-door hatchback of sorts. This TT was enormous fun. I changed it in 2008 for a 3-litre Mercedes CLK, which was great but not sporty.'



7th

2014
**Morgan Plus 8
(2014)**

'This followed a year in a Morgan 3-litre Roadster. The Plus 8 has nearly 400bhp and the very modern Aero chassis. We covered 9000 miles in our first year. Driving this car makes everyone smile!'



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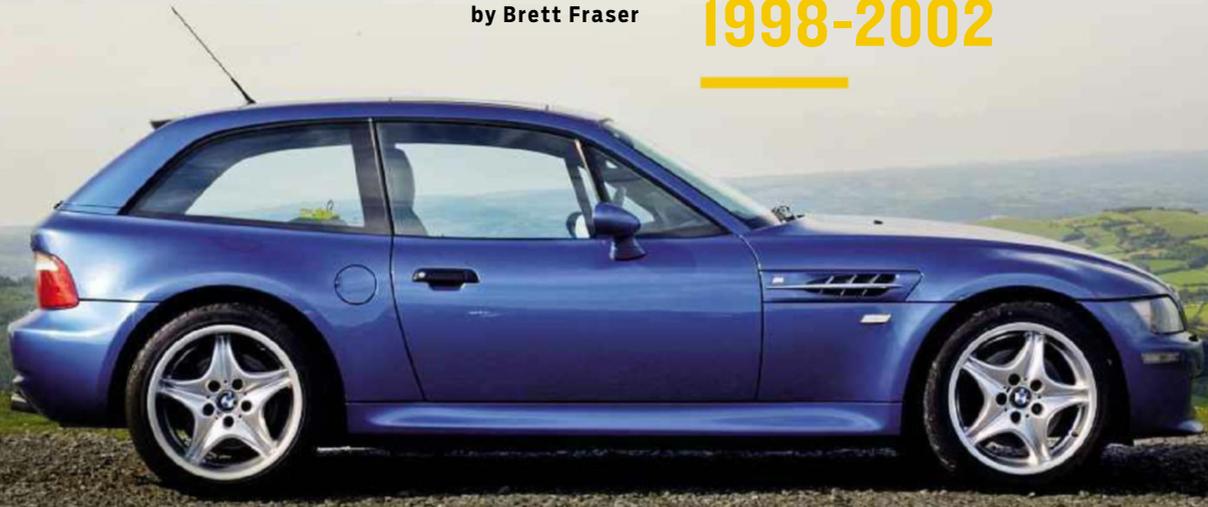
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It's rare, unique and enjoying a growth in demand. So what should you look out for if you're thinking of spending £25k-plus on BMW's oddball M-car?

by Brett Fraser

BUYING GUIDE: BMW M COUPE 1998-2002



SOME CARS ARE INSTANT HITS. Others take far longer to wheedle their way into your affections. Roll forward the BMW M Coupé. Arriving in 1998, it should have been just what the enthusiast ordered. BMW M badge: excellent. Rampant 317bhp straight-six from the E36 M3: spot-on. Stiffer bodyshell than that of the Z3 M Roadster that lots of folk wanted to love, but couldn't: splendid news. Thuggish stance to complement its hot-rod mechanicals: oh yes.

And yet... A lot of people struggled with the M Coupé's looks. Really struggled. And still do. The negativity is perhaps a little surprising given that other 'sports estates' such as the Reliant Scimitar GTE, Lancia Beta HPE and Lynx Eventer generally get a good press, but

the haters really stick it into the BMW. Amongst many insults slung in its direction from early on was 'clown's shoe', and it remains the most oft-repeated epithet for the maligned M-car.

Another factor that may not have worked in its favour was the lack of driver aids in the first-generation model, which is known by its engine code of S50. Even with 245/40 ZR17 rear tyres, the M motor's prodigious output could easily create back-end mayhem.

These things may help explain why total global right-hand-drive production amounted to just 821 units by the time S50 production ceased in 2000. So an S50 M Coupé is a rare bit of kit. But not as rare as its successor, the S54 M Coupé, global RHD production of which totalled a paltry 168 units (with 123 coming to the UK).

That tally is a tad unfortunate, as the S54, which went on sale in the UK in 2001, is the model to go for. Cosmetically little changed over the S50. However, it was powered by the in-line six from the E46 M3. Power and torque figures barely rose from those of the E36 engine, but it enjoyed a drive-by-wire throttle that made for smoother power delivery; the S54 had stronger mid-range torque, too. On the other hand, the S50 was more of a rev-hound, a rawer drive, if that's your thing. Critically, though, DSC traction control was standard on the S54.

After years in the doldrums, prices of both models have started to pick up quickly. Today an S50 starts at £25k, while you're looking at high £30ks for an S54. So if you fancy an M Coupé, move now before those prices climb any higher.

CHECKPOINTS

ENGINE

In 2001 the 3.2-litre in-line six-cylinder engine from the S54 M Coupé (and, of course, the E46 M3) was awarded the title of International Engine of the Year. And BMW M did such a fine job of its engineering that although the engine is now 15 years old, and by its very nature is likely to have been used hard, it remains largely trouble-free.

Provided – as always – that it has been regularly serviced and maintained. Russell Knight of M Coupé specialist Knight's Garage reckons these engines will do '100,000 miles without breaking sweat'.

Big time gaps between service stamps will probably be because the owner does few miles and heeds the advice of the on-board service indicator. These days

keen owners tend to have their S50 serviced every 12 months or 9000 miles, while S54 models can wait until 12,000 miles or a year and a half.

With both engines rough running and power loss can be caused by problems with the Double VANOS variable valve timing system. It's a relatively easy fix but could still cost you £600-900. Ticking sounds from the top

of the engine could indicate badly adjusted valve clearances: BMW dealers and specialists should adjust them as a matter of course at each service, but always ask.

A potential death sentence for S54 engines is crumbling crankshaft bearing shells caused by defective oil pumps. BMW recalled E46 M3s to replace them under warranty, but not Z3 M Coupés... By now

most owners are likely to have had the shells replaced, but make sure – replacements could cost you upwards of £750, while if they fail in use then the cost of a full engine rebuild will bring tears to your eyes.

TRANSMISSION

The narrowness of the Z3's transmission tunnel means that the six-speed manual from the M3 doesn't fit, so

M Coupés 'made do' with a five-speeder that has proven remarkably robust. However, the lever springs in high-mileage cars can stretch, making the lever sloppy. Replacement springs are relatively inexpensive, but dropping the gearbox to install them rather less so.

Diff mounting brackets can sometimes fail and as they move around start



Top: M Coupe can be a handful, so check for accident damage.
Right: VANOS issues aside, engines are largely trouble-free

to rip the boot floor – lift the boot carpet and look for cracks around the floor's outer edges.

SUSPENSION, STEERING, BRAKES

A comparatively light car (1375kg), the M Coupe doesn't stress its brakes too much, so discs can last 20,000-30,000 miles. The steering and suspension are generally fuss-free, but

clunks and rattles from behind you can signify worn rear suspension top mounts.

BODY, INTERIOR, ELECTRICS

The lack of driver aids in the S50 has seen a fair few written off; check if the car you're looking at is a Cat D. Wheelarches and the underbody can rust badly if the first signs of the red devil aren't quickly attended to.

RIVALS

BMW E46 M3 COUPE

Despite sharing its S54 engine with the later M Coupe, the M3 is more powerful (338bhp), but it's not as lairy or as distinctive. Prices start from £10,000.

TVR TUSCAN

Wild looks and crazy performance make the Tuscan every bit as much of an oddball as the M Coupe. Rare, too. Offers 350 to 400bhp, depending on model. From £22k.

PORSCHE BOXSTER S (986)

Not as powerful (250-256bhp) or as brutish as the BMW, yet its superb chassis helps it to negate those handicaps point-to-point. From £5200.

INFORMATION

M COUPE S50 (S54 in brackets)

Engine	In-line 6-cyl, 3201cc [3246cc]
Max power	317bhp @ 7400rpm [321bhp @ 7400rpm]
Max torque	258lb ft @ 3250rpm [261lb ft @ 4900rpm]
Transmission	Five-speed manual, rear-wheel drive
Weight	1375kg
Power-to-weight	234bhp/ton [237bhp/ton]
0-62mph	5.4sec [5.3sec]
Top speed	155mph (limited)
Price new	£36,000 [£40,595]

PARTS PRICES

Prices from sytnerhighwycombebmw.co.uk. Tyre price from blackcircles.com. All prices include VAT but exclude fitting.

Tyres (each)	£79.62 front, £140.35 rear [Goodyear Eagle F1 Asymmetric 2]
Front pads (set)	£120.53 [wear indicators £13.66]
Front discs (pair)	£381.64
Damper	£237.86
Oil filter	£15.83
Air filter	£26.45

SERVICING

Prices from sytnerhighwycombebmw.co.uk, including VAT

Small service	£270 approx. [oil change service]
Major service	£850 approx.
Brake fluid change	£70

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'I BOUGHT ONE'

RUSSELL KNIGHT

'I've always had an interest in BMWs, especially those that don't conform to the norm. So the Z3 M Coupé had an immediate appeal to me. I know plenty of people who didn't like it when it was new but have now grown to appreciate it.

'I bought my first one when I was 21 and before I went to work for BMW. It was an S54, a very rare model, metallic grey with a red and black interior. I wish I'd never sold it. I kept it for about a year and used it for some trackdays, a European road trip and a visit to the Nürburgring. It was very road-trip friendly, effortless and tireless.

'I then bought a Z4 M Coupé – I just assumed it was the right way to move on. But I soon found that I missed the Z3 M's quirks and charms and realised that I

had to have another.

'Currently I have a black example with black interior that I bought about two and half years ago. It had 108,000 miles on the clock and I picked it up for £8500. Yes it was cheap, but I bought it on the understanding that there was a lot of work – a lot of expensive work – to be done on it. I'm turning it into a track toy and have stripped it of some of the heavy interior fittings and put on some lightweight panels so that it now weighs 1280kg. I've also installed a supercharger so that it now produces 497bhp...

'Three and a half years ago I set up my own business trading in high-performance cars [Knight's Garage] and I've sort of specialised in Z3 M Coupés because I'm so passionate about

them. With proper servicing and maintenance they're not fragile, even when hard-driven. I would always recommend a pre-purchase inspection by a reputable outfit such as Munich Legends, and don't be put off by a car that has had a lot of owners: strangely, some owners don't drive them much.

'To me the Z3 M is the essence of a modern classic: it's fast, fun, practical, and with the S54 it's powered by the last of the great M-power straight-sixes.'



IN THE CLASSIFIEDS

2000 S50 M COUPE £26,250

87,000 miles, Dakar Yellow, black nappa leather, full service history and a file of bills for maintenance and refurbishment

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1999 S50 M COUPE £36,995

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WHAT WE SAID



GT GROUP TEST, MAY 2002

'Having lived with this M Coupé for nine months and nearly 20,000 miles, I've come to appreciate its stunning turn of speed and grotesquely muscular looks, but I'm also aware that I've learned to live with its crude chassis and twitchy wet-road behaviour. After his late night dash here, John Barker clearly hasn't.

“The M Coupé is very surface-sensitive,” he observes. “The drive over in the wet and the dark was quite wearing, and on a couple of occasions I was glad of those patches of emery cloth-like Shell Grip they use on tricky corners. Those semi-trailing rear arms really are a throwback and kind of dissuaded me from pushing hard through high-speed corners.”

'Even moderate use of the throttle on wet tarmac kicks the M's tail loose and brings the rather clumsy stability control juddering into life. You need your wits about you, but crude underpinnings or not, the steering is ultra-direct and quicker reacting than the much-lauded M3's, with plenty of feel from the front end and strong resistance to understeer. Perhaps because you sit so far back, you're much more aware of when the rear-end is getting lively.

'One aspect of the car that never diminishes with familiarity is the engine, and its ability to fire the M Coupé towards the horizon like an unusually shaped artillery shell. It really is a magnificent motor. Whatever the gear, any throttle input whatsoever delivers a real kick in the kidneys.' – **evo** 043

WHAT TO PAY

£?
£25k+

Now that punters are finally feeling the love for the M Coupé, prices are climbing. Even private sellers are asking a minimum of £25k for an S50 with 80,000-plus miles. With fewer miles – say, 36,000-46,000 – S50s are hitting the forecourts at £36k-40k. S54s are hard to find – it's estimated that only around 100 survive with RHD – and are even stronger money. An 11,000-mile example recently sold for £58,500 at auction.

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MODEL FOCUS: NISSAN SKYLINE GT-R (R32/R33/R34)

These supercar-bating legends are a truly unique proposition. Catch one while you can

by Adam Towler



WHO DOESN'T LOVE 'A PROPER Skyline'? These three cars remain the doyens of that wonderful 15-year period when Japan gave us some of the greatest performance cars ever created.

That era started in 1989, as did production of the R32 GT-R, and while the ingredients remained consistent through the R33 and R34 generations, the recipe was steadily evolved. At their hearts, each car has the classic RB26 straight-six, AWD and sophisticated chassis technology. These were refined for the bigger R33, then brutalised for the monstrous R34.

As it always was, a Skyline GT-R is for many a blank canvas upon which to create a unique and massively powerful all-wheel-drive beast. Yet as

time goes on, and the ownership profile shifts, there are plenty now who crave the spec as it was when the cars left the factory. Standard parts are often hard to come by, and not cheap.

Values of GT-Rs have risen dramatically in recent years. Where a decent R32 could once be picked up for less than the price of a new Toyota Aygo, values are now consistent with period rivals from Porsche. At the top of the tree, any low-mileage R34, especially a high-spec or late-model variant, is pushing and in some cases exceeding the £100,000 marker, overshadowing the Honda NSX in the process. Given R34s aren't eligible for import into the US market yet (they need to reach 25 years old to be deemed classics) there may be another hike in values to come.

Expert view

OSMAN HUSSAIN, HARLOW-JAP-AUTOS.CO.UK

'All the Skyline models have increased in value, but particularly the rare and limited-edition examples. The R32 is now eligible for import into the USA, and that's seen them double in price, and the R34 has also doubled in the past 18 months.'

'There are no set rules on modifications. There are those buyers who want a highly modified car and those who don't want any mods at all. Right now an R34 is £50,000 to £150,000 for something decent. I believe they will continue to rise, with another jump when R34s become legal in the US.'

'You'll pay £20,000 for a good R32, and £25,000 to £30,000 for a very low-mileage one. There's not much difference in the price of R33s, but a special such as the 400R will be £100,000. A very low-mileage R34 V-Spec II Nür in Millennium Jade sold in Japan recently for £120,000. The post-Brexit exchange rate isn't helping, either.'

'We rarely buy cars from the UK because of rust – the real killer of these cars. Fresh imports are more in demand. But the Japanese now want a lot of money for their cars, and there is plenty to look out for: a lot have been in an accident, or had their mileages wound back. We have an experienced team in Japan inspecting the cars for us.'



SERIAL BUYER

RICHARD WHEELER

Richard currently owns eight Skyline GT-Rs. Yes, eight. Including five R34s, from the relatively mild – well, 380bhp in the form of a Nismo-tuned V-Spec – to an 800bhp-plus Bayside Blue monster.

'I had three R35 GT-Rs,' says Richard, 'but discovered I'm more into Skylines when I bought my first R32. If I had left that car standard it would be worth £22,000 now – I paid £11,000. I then spent £60,000 tuning it, before realising that it's a lot cheaper to buy ex-demo cars from Japan already tuned.'

'The thing is, they don't cost you much to own after the initial capital costs. None of them cover many miles in a year, so the running costs and insurance are very low. They're also going up in value at the same time, but I don't buy them as an investment. In fact, I buy the wrong cars for an investment – I like highly modified ones.'

'I don't own any R33s because I don't like the shape. They're great value, but don't have the wow factor of the other cars.'

'I love the combination of handling and the way they deliver the power. You have to think about driving them. There's something about the shape, too – it's iconic, there's nothing else on the road like it.'



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UPGRADES: TECHART'S 710BHP 911

Subtle it ain't, but if you want everyone to know your 911 Turbo has been tweaked, look no further by **Antony Ingram**

GERMAN TUNER TECHART has revealed its latest take on the 991-generation Porsche 911 Turbo and Turbo S – the 911 GTstreet R.

TechArt replaces the body panels with lightweight carbonfibre alternatives, designed with functional improvements over the originals. The front splitter, for instance, features an active aerodynamic element to improve airflow to the water and oil coolers, and the central element helps to reduce lift.

The front wheelarches feature GT3 RS-style air outlets to increase downforce and improve brake cooling, and large carbonfibre air intakes force airflow to the engine's intercoolers. At the rear, air-outlet ducts, a diffuser and a 15-degree-adjustable GT-style wing further enhance aerodynamics and cooling. Overall, 321kg of downforce at 186mph is claimed.

Either 20-inch centre-lock forged wheels or a 21-inch option are available, with rear rubber up to 325mm wide. TechArt's VarioPlus coilovers are also available (compatible with



the PDCC system offered by Porsche), while that carbon front splitter can be saved with a nose-lift system that raises the prow by 60mm. Interior options include sports seats, six-point harnesses, a roll-cage and a helmet holder.

TechArt's power upgrades will result in potent performance. Currently, the increases are to 632bhp (up from 572 for the Turbo S) and 649lb ft (up from 533), but 710bhp will soon be offered. Even in 632bhp trim it'll reach 62mph in 2.7sec and hit 210mph.

There's no word on pricing yet, but given the extent of the modifications and the amount of carbonfibre involved, we're guessing a GTstreet R won't come cheap.

Aftermarket news



TUNIT OPTIMUM PLUS

Non-performance engines are tuned on the conservative side and simple ECU changes can liberate plenty of power. Tunit's latest plug-in-and-go product offers power and torque improvements for various petrol models (a diesel version is also available, with positive reviews among owners). It can be adjusted in four stages via an Android or iOS smartphone and is priced at £477.60.



AC SCHNITZER M2

Renowned BMW tuner AC Schnitzer has revealed a full package of improvements for BMW's smallest M model. ECU modifications, an upgraded intercooler and a valve-controlled exhaust system liberate 414bhp from the 2979cc turbocharged straight-six (up from 365bhp). A carbonfibre aero package is also available, as is a choice of either coilovers or a lowering spring kit.



1026BHP SANTA FE

Hyundai's Santa Fe is a worthy method of family transport, if not typical **evo** fodder. But Bisimoto – best known for tuning old 911s – unveiled a rather more interesting take on the crossover at SEMA. With a twin-turbo 3.8-litre V6, the 'Santa-Fast' puts 1026bhp to the rear wheels through a Hyundai Genesis gearbox and Equus diff. KW coilovers and Toyo R888 tyres do their best to glue it to the road.



MAZDA AT SEMA

Not strictly aftermarket, but Mazda continues to illustrate the potential of its MX-5 with customised specials. The Speedster Evolution sheds weight from 2015's Speedster concept, dropping it to just 898kg. It also gets a digital display from the Global Cup race car. Meanwhile, the RF Kuro gets the racer's suspension, wheels and tyres, too, plus a centre-exit exhaust that adds 6-7bhp.

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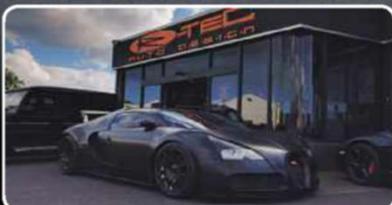
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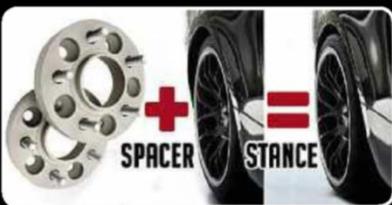
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OUR CHOICE

Renaultsport Mégane 275. This generation of Mégane has got better and better with every update, and the 275 is simply sublime. Optional Öhlins dampers and Michelin Pilot Sport Cup 2 rubber (taken from the Trophy-R) aren't essential, but improve things even further.



BEST OF THE REST

The Volkswagen Golf GTI Clubsport S (left) is our favourite hyperhatch, with the four-wheel-drive Ford Focus RS close behind. VW's Golf R is also brilliant if you're looking for something a little more mature. Of the smaller hatches, the Fiesta ST Mountune just edges the Peugeot 208 GTI by Peugeot Sport.

MAKE & MODEL	ISSUE NO.	PRICE	ENGINE CYL/CC	BHP/RPM	LB FT/RPM	WEIGHT	BHP/TON	0-60MPH	0-100MPH	MAX MPH	CO2 g/km	EC MPGS	EVO RATING	
Peugeot 308 GTI 270 by Peugeot Sport	229 R	£28,890	4/1598	266/6000	243/1900	1205kg	224	6.0	-	155	139	47.1	+ Thrilling and engaging on smooth roads - A real handful on bumpy ones	★★★★★
Peugeot 205 GTI 1.9	195 R	'88-'91	4/1905	130/6000	119/4750	910kg	145	7.9	-	124	-	36.7	+ Still scintillating after all these years - Brittle build quality	★★★★★
Peugeot 306 GTI 1.6	020 R	'93-'01	4/1998	167/6500	142/5500	1215kg	139	7.2	20.1	140	-	30.1	+ One of the great GTIs - They don't make them like this any more	★★★★★
Peugeot 306 Rallye	095 R	'98-'99	4/1998	167/6500	142/5500	1199kg	142	6.9	19.2	137	-	30.1	+ Essentially a GTI-6 for less dosh - Limited choice of colours	★★★★★
Renaultsport Twingo 133	175 R	'08-'13	4/1598	131/6750	118/4400	1050kg	127	8.6	-	125	150	43.5	+ Renaultsport experience for pocket money - Optional Cup chassis gives bouncy ride	★★★★★
Renaultsport Clio 200 Auto	184 R	£20,445	4/1618	197/6000	177/1750	1204kg	166	6.9	17.9	143	144	44.8	+ Faster, more refined, easier to drive - We miss the revvy nat-asp engine and manual 'box	★★★★★
Renaultsport Clio 220 Trophy	229 D	£22,425	4/1618	217/6050	206/2000	1204kg	183	6.6	-	146	135	47.9	+ Willing chassis - Awful paddleshift gearbox	★★★★★
Renaultsport Clio 200 Cup	195 R	'09-'13	4/1998	197/7100	159/5400	1204kg	166	6.6	16.7	141	190	34.5	+ The hot Clio at its best - They don't make it anymore	★★★★★
Renaultsport Clio 197 Cup	115 R	'07-'09	4/1998	194/7250	158/5550	1240kg	161	6.9	-	134	-	33.6	+ Quick, polished and capable - Not as much sheer fun as 182 Cup	★★★★★
Renaultsport Clio 182	066 R	'04-'06	4/1998	180/6500	148/5250	1110kg	165	6.6	17.5	139	-	34.9	+ Took hot hatches to a new level - Flawed driving position	★★★★★
Renaultsport Clio 182 Cup	187 R	'04-'06	4/1998	180/6500	148/5250	1090kg	168	6.5	-	139	-	34.9	+ Full of beans, fantastic value - Sunday-market upholstery	★★★★★
Renaultsport Clio Trophy	200 R	'05-'06	4/1998	180/6500	148/5250	1090kg	168	6.6	17.3	140	-	34.9	+ The most fun you can have on three (sometimes two) wheels - Just 500 were built	★★★★★
Renaultsport Clio 172 Cup	048 R	'02-'04	4/1998	170/6250	147/5400	1011kg	171	6.5	17.7	138	-	-	+ Bargain old-school hot hatch - Nervous in the wet, no ABS	★★★★★
Renaultsport Clio V6 255	057 R	'03-'05	6/2946	251/7150	221/4650	1400kg	182	5.8	-	153	-	23.0	+ Quick, agile, roomier than the original's edgy handling - Uninspired interior	★★★★★
Renaultsport Clio V6	029 R	'99-'02	6/2946	227/6000	221/3750	1335kg	173	5.8	17.0	145	-	23.0	+ Pocket supercar - Mid-engined handling can be tricky	★★★★★
Renault Clio Williams	195 R	'93-'96	4/1988	148/6100	126/4500	981kg	153	7.6	20.8	134	-	26.0	+ One of the best hot hatches ever - Can be fragile	★★★★★
Renault 5 GT Turbo	195 R	'87-'91	4/1397	118/5750	122/3000	855kg	140	7.3	-	120	-	28.4	+ Clio Williams' grand-daddy - Few unmodified ones left	★★★★★
Renaultsport Mégane 275 Cup-S	223 D	£23,935	4/1998	271/5500	265/3000	1394kg	198	5.8	-	158	174	37.7	+ Cup chassis, LSD, the same engine as the Trophy-R - Could be too hardcore for some	★★★★★
Renaultsport Mégane Nav 275	-	£25,935	4/1998	271/5500	265/3000	1394kg	198	5.8	-	158	174	37.7	+ A more luxurious 275 - Cup chassis is an option	★★★★★
Renaultsport Mégane 265 Cup	195 R	'12-'15	4/1998	261/5500	265/3000	1387kg	191	6.4	14.8	158	174	37.7	+ A hot hatch benchmark - Cupholder could be better positioned	★★★★★
Renaultsport Mégane 275 Trophy	212 R	'14-'15	4/1998	271/5500	265/3000	1376kg	200	5.8	-	159	174	37.7	+ Another cracking Trophy model - Stripped-out Trophy-R is even more thrilling	★★★★★
Renaultsport Mégane 275 Trophy-R	215 R	'14-'15	4/1998	271/5500	265/3000	1297kg	212	5.8	-	158	174	37.7	+ As absorbing as a 911 GT3 RS on the right road - Too uncompromising for some; pricey	★★★★★
Renaultsport Mégane 250 Cup	139 R	'09-'12	4/1998	247/5500	251/3000	1387kg	181	6.1	14.6	156	190	34.4	+ Fantastic chassis... - partially obscured by new-found maturity	★★★★★
Renaultsport Mégane dCi 175 Cup	119 R	'07-'09	4/1995	173/3750	265/2000	1470kg	119	8.3	23.5	137	-	43.5	+ A diesel with a genuinely sporty chassis - Could take more power	★★★★★
Renaultsport Mégane 230 FI Team R26	195 R	'07-'09	4/1998	227/5500	229/3000	1345kg	171	6.2	16.0	147	-	-	+ The car the R26.R is based on - FI Team stickers in dubious taste	★★★★★
Renaultsport Mégane R26.R	200 R	'08-'09	4/1998	227/5500	229/3000	1220kg	189	5.8	15.1	147	-	-	+ One of the true hot hatch heroes - Two seats, plastic rear windows	★★★★★
SEAT Ibiza Cupra	225 R	£18,100	4/1798	189/4300	236/1450	1185kg	162	6.7	-	146	145	45.6	+ Quick, competent, refined, and manual only - Not exciting enough	★★★★★
SEAT Ibiza Cupra	183 D	'10-'15	4/1390	178/6200	184/2000	1259kg	144	6.9	-	142	139	47.9	+ Punchy engine, unflappable DSG - Lacks engagement, DSG only	★★★★★
SEAT Leon Cupra 290	227 R	£28,380	4/1984	286/5900	258/1700	1300kg	224	6.4	13.4	155	156	42.2	+ As below, but with another 10bhp - As below	★★★★★
SEAT Leon Cupra 280	220 R	'14-'15	4/1984	276/5600	258/1700	1300kg	216	5.8	-	155	149	44.1	+ Serious pace and agility for Golf GTI money - The Mk7 Golf R	★★★★★
SEAT Leon Cupra	105 R	'07-'11	4/1984	237/5700	221/2200	1375kg	175	6.3	-	153	190	34.0	+ Great engine, composure - Doesn't have adjustability of old Cupra R	★★★★★
SEAT Leon Cupra R	139 R	'10-'12	4/1984	261/6000	258/2500	1375kg	193	6.1	14.0	155	190	34.9	+ Bold car, blinding engine - Lacks the character of its rival mega-hatches	★★★★★
SEAT Leon Cupra R 225	067 R	'03-'06	4/1781	222/5900	206/2200	1376kg	164	6.9	-	150	-	32.1	+ Cross-country pace, practicality, value - Not as thrilling as some	★★★★★
Skoda Fabia vRS (Mk2)	146 D	'10-'14	4/1390	178/6200	184/2000	1218kg	148	7.3	-	139	148	45.6	+ Well priced, well made, with great engine and DSG 'box - Dull steering	★★★★★
Skoda Fabia vRS (Mk1)	077 R	'04-'07	4/1896	130/4000	229/1900	1315kg	100	9.6	-	127	-	55.4	+ Fascinatingly fun and frugal hot hatch - A little short on steering feel	★★★★★
Skoda Octavia vRS (Mk3)	187 D	£24,230	4/1984	217/4500	258/1500	1345kg	164	6.8	-	154	142	45.6	+ Quick, agile, roomier than a Golf - Ride is harsh for what could be a family car	★★★★★
Skoda Octavia vRS 230 (Mk3)	215 D	£26,350	4/1984	227/4700	258/1500	1345kg	171	6.7	-	155	142	45.6	+ Limited-slip diff makes for a sharper steer - It could handle more than the extra 10bhp	★★★★★
Skoda Octavia vRS TDI 4x4 (Mk3)	223 D	£27,590	4/1968	181/3500	206/1750	1475kg	125	7.6	-	142	129	57.7	+ Four-wheel drive tightens the vRS chassis - Diesel and DSG only	★★★★★
Skoda Octavia vRS (Mk2)	163 R	'05-'13	4/1998	197/5100	206/1700	1395kg	143	7.3	-	149	175	37.7	+ Drives like a GTI but costs much less - Green brake calipers?	★★★★★
Subaru Impreza STI 330S	124 R	'08-'10	4/2457	325/5400	347/3400	1505kg	219	4.4	-	155	-	-	+ A bit quicker than the STI... - ...but not better	★★★★★
Suzuki Swift Sport (Mk2)	175 R	£13,999	4/1586	134/6900	118/4400	1045kg	130	8.7	-	121	147	44.1	+ The Swift's still a great pocket rocket - But it's lost a little adjustability	★★★★★
Suzuki Swift Sport (Mk1)	132 R	'05-'11	4/1586	123/6800	109/4800	1030kg	121	8.9	-	124	165	39.8	+ Entertaining handling, well built - Lacking in steering feedback	★★★★★
Vauxhall Corsa VXR	211 R	£18,125	4/1598	202/5800	206/1900	1278kg	161	6.5	-	143	174	37.7	+ Begg to be wrung out - You'll need the £2400 Performance Pack	★★★★★
Vauxhall Corsa VXR	154 R	'07-'14	4/1598	189/5850	192/1980	1166kg	165	6.8	-	140	172	38.7	+ Looks snazzy, punchy engine - Lacks feel, uncouth compared with rivals	★★★★★
Vauxhall Corsa VXR N'ring/Clubsport	164 R	'11-'13/'14	4/1598	202/5750	206/2250	1166kg	176	6.5	-	143	178	-	+ VXR gets more power and a limited-slip diff - But they come at a price	★★★★★
Vauxhall Astra VXR (Mk2)	207 R	£27,850	4/1998	276/5500	295/2500	1475kg	190	5.9	-	155	184	34.9	+ Better than the car it replaces; loony turbo pace - Lacks RS Mégane's precision	★★★★★
Vauxhall Astra VXR (Mk1)	102 R	'05-'11	4/1998	237/5600	236/2400	1393kg	173	6.7	16.7	152	221	30.7	+ Fast and furious - Lacks a little composure and precision	★★★★★
VW Up/SEAT Mii/Skoda Citigo	171 R	£8275+	3/1999	59/5000	70/3000	854kg	70	14.1	-	99	105	62.8	+ Accomplished city car is dynamically sound... - but predictably slow	★★★★★
VW Polo GTI	211 R	£19,125	4/1798	189/4200	236/1450	1197kg	160	6.7	-	146	139	47.1	+ Smooth and brawny - Fiesta ST is more engaging	★★★★★
VW Polo GTI	154 R	'10-'14	4/1390	178/6200	184/2000	1184kg	153	6.8	-	142	139	47.9	+ Modern-day mk1 Golf GTI gets twin-clutch DSG - It's a little bit bland	★★★★★
VW Golf GTD (Mk7)	200 D	£26,955	4/1968	181/3500	280/1750	1302kg	141	7.5	-	143	114	64.2	+ Pace, fuel economy, sounds good for a diesel - Lacks the extra edge of the GTI	★★★★★
VW Golf GTI (Mk7)	229 R	£28,515	4/1984	217/4500	258/1500	1276kg	173	6.5	-	153	139	47.1	+ Brilliantly resolved - Lacks the punch of newer rivals	★★★★★
VW Golf GTI Clubsport Edition 40 (Mk7)	218 D	£30,935	4/1984	286/5350	258/1700	1300kg	224	6.3	-	155	162	40.4	+ A faster, sharper, more entertaining GTI - Some rivals are more exciting on track	★★★★★
VW Golf GTI Clubsport S (Mk7)	229 R	£33,995	4/1984	306/5800	280/1850	1285kg	242	5.8	12.8	165	172	38.2	+ Runner-up at Evo Car of the Year 2016 - Could look more special	★★★★★
VW Golf R (Mk7)	220 R	£31,685	4/1984	296/5500	280/1800	1401kg	215	5.2	12.4	155	165	39.8	+ A VW 'R' model you can take seriously - Mégane 275 just edges it as a pure drivers' car	★★★★★
VW Golf GTI (Mk6)	172 R	'09-'13	4/1984	207/5300	207/1700	1318kg	160	6.4	16.5	148	170	38.7	+ Still a very accomplished hot hatch - 207bhp isn't a lot any more	★★★★★
VW Golf R (Mk6)	140 D	'10-'13	4/1984	266/6000	258/2500	1446kg	187	5.7	-	155	199	33.2	+ Great engine, tremendous pace and poise - High price, adaptive dampers optional	★★★★★
VW Golf GTI (Mk5)	195 R	'04-'09	4/1984	197/5100	207/1800	1336kg	150	6.7	17.9	145	192	35.2	+ Character and ability: the GTI's return to form - Lacking firepower?	★★★★★
VW Golf R32 (Mk5)	087 R	'06-'09	6/3189	246/6300	236/2500	1466kg	170	5.8	15.2	155	257	26.4	+ Traction's great and you'll love the soundtrack - We'd still have a GTI	★★★★★
VW Golf R32 (Mk4)	053 R	'02-'04	6/3189	237/6250	236/2800	1477kg	163	6.4	16.3	154	-	24.6	+ Charismatic - Boomy engine can be tiresome	★★★★★
VW Golf GTI 16v (Mk2)	195 R	'88-'92	4/1781	139/6100	124/4600	960kg	147	7.9	-	129	-	26.6	+ Still feels everyday useable - Very hard to find a standard one	★★★★★
VW Golf GTI (Mk1, 1.8)	224 R	'82-'84	4/1781	127/5800	109/3500	840kg	135	8.1	-	112	-	36.0	+ The car that started it all - Tricky to find an unmodified one	★★★★★
Volvo C30 T5 R-Design	122 R	'08-'12	5/2521	227/5000	236/1500	1347kg	165	6.6	16.9	149	203	32.5	+ Good-looking, desirable Volvo - Lacks edge of best hatches. Avoid auto	★★★★★

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OUR CHOICE

BMW M5. The turbocharging of BMW's M-cars met with scepticism, but the current M5's 4.4-litre twin-turbo V8 feels a perfect fit. It's a brutally fast car, and there are clever (and useable) adjustable driving modes. The '30 Jahre' special edition, which has an extra 40bhp, is especially worth a look.



BEST OF THE REST

Mercedes' E63 AMG (pictured) is hot on the M5's heels, although Alfa Romeo's Giulia Quadrifoglio is hugely tempting, being the first Alfa in a long time that's a serious threat for its rivals. If you must have an SUV, take a look at Jaguar's F-Pace or Porsche's Macan Turbo, Macan GTS or Cayenne GTS.

	ISSUE NO.	PRICE	ENGINE CYL/CC	BHP/RPM	LB FT/RPM	WEIGHT	BHP/TON	0-60MPH	0-100MPH	MAX MPH	CO2 g/km	EC MPGS	EVO RATING	
Alfa Romeo Giulia Quadrifoglio	229 R	£59,000	6/2891	503/6500	443/2500	1524kg	335	3.9	-	191	198	40.3	+ If Ferrari built a saloon (really) - Lacks the final polish of German rivals	★★★★★
Alpina D3 Biturbo (F30)	192 D	£47,950	6/2993	345/4000	516/1500	1585kg	221	4.6	-	173	139	53.3	+ 173mph from a 3-litre diesel! Brilliant chassis, too - Auto only	★★★★★
Alpina B3 Biturbo (F30)	188 D	£57,450	6/2979	404/5500	442/3000	1630kg	252	4.3	-	190	177	37.2	+ Understated appearance, monster performance - E90 M3 is better on the limit	★★★★★
Aston Martin Rapide S	201 D	£147,950	12/5935	552/6650	465/5500	1990kg	282	4.2	-	203	300	21.9	+ Oozes star quality, gearbox on 2015MY cars a big improvement - It's cosy in the back	★★★★★
Aston Martin Rapide	141 R	£10-13	12/5935	470/6000	443/5000	1990kg	240	5.2	-	188	355	-	+ Better than its DB9 sibling - More a 2+2 than a proper four-seater	★★★★★
Audi S3 Saloon	192 D	£32,330	4/1984	296/5500	280/1800	1430kg	210	5.3	-	155	162	26.4	+ On paper a match for the original S4 - In reality much less interesting	★★★★★
Audi S4 (B9)	225 D	£44,000	6/2995	349/5400	369/1370	1630kg	218	4.7	-	155	166	38.7	+ Strong response and delivery from turbo engine - Chassis feels softer than before	★★★★★
Audi S4 (B8)	166 D	£08-16	6/2995	328/5500	324/2900	1705kg	195	4.9	-	155	190	34.9	+ Great supercharged powertrain, secure chassis - The RS4	★★★★★
Audi RS4 Avant (B8)	216 R	£12-15	8/4163	444/8250	317/4000	1795kg	251	4.5	10.5	174	249	26.4	+ Looks and sounds the part, thunderously fast - Unnatural steering, dull dynamics	★★★★★
Audi RS4 (B7)	088 R	£05-08	8/4163	414/7800	317/5500	1650kg	255	4.5	10.9	155	-	-	+ 414bhp at 7800rpm! And there's an estate version too - Busy under braking	★★★★★
Audi RS4 (B5)	192 R	£00-02	6/2671	375/6100	325/2500	1620kg	236	4.8	12.1	170	-	17.0	+ Effortless pace - Not the last word in agility, Bends wheel rims	★★★★★
Audi RS2	214 R	£94-95	5/2226	315/6500	302/3000	1595kg	201	4.8	13.1	162	-	18.0	+ Storming performance (thanks to Porsche) - Try finding one	★★★★★
Audi S6	091 D	£06-11	10/5204	429/6800	398/3000	1910kg	228	5.2	-	155	299	22.4	+ Even faster, and discreet with it - Very muted V10	★★★★★
Audi RS6 Avant (C7)	203 R	£79,500	8/3993	552/5700	516/1750	1935kg	290	3.6	8.2	155	223	29.4	+ Performance, foolproof powertrain, beefy looks - Feels a bit one-dimensional	★★★★★
Audi RS6 Avant Performance (C7)	224 D	£86,420	8/3993	597/6100	553/2500	1950kg	311	3.7	-	155	223	29.4	+ As above, but with even more power - A stern test of self-control	★★★★★
Audi RS6 Avant (C6)	116 R	£08-10	10/4991	572/6250	479/1500	2025kg	287	4.3	9.7	155	333	20.2	+ The world's most powerful estate - Power isn't everything	★★★★★
Audi RS6 Avant (C5)	052 R	£02-04	8/4172	444/5700	413/1950	1865kg	242	4.8	11.6	155	-	-	+ The ultimate estate car? - Numb steering	★★★★★
Audi RS7 Sportback	208 R	£64,485	8/3993	552/5700	516/1750	1920kg	292	3.9	-	155	229	28.8	+ Stonking performance, great looks - Numb driving experience	★★★★★
Audi S7 Sportback	171 D	£64,380	8/3993	414/5000	406/1400	1945kg	216	4.6	-	155	225	-	+ Looks and drives better than S6 it's based on - Costs £8000 more	★★★★★
Audi S8 Plus	217 D	£98,395	8/3993	597/6100	553/2500	1990kg	305	3.8	-	155	229	28.2	+ Fantastic drivetrain, quality and refinement - Dynamic Steering feels artificial	★★★★★
Audi RS Q3	206 D	£46,120	5/2480	335/5300	332/1600	1655kg	206	4.8	-	155	203	32.1	+ Surprisingly characterful; better than many RSs - High centre of gravity	★★★★★
Bentley Flying Spur V8	200 D	£132,800	8/3997	500/6000	487/1700	2342kg	217	4.9	-	183	254	25.9	+ Effortless performance with real top-end kick - Determinedly unsporing	★★★★★
Bentley Flying Spur	185 D	£154,900	12/5998	616/6000	590/1600	2400kg	261	4.3	-	200	343	19.0	+ More power than old Flying Spur Speed - Feels its weight; engine sounds dull	★★★★★
Bentley Bentayga	217 D	£162,700	12/5950	600/5000	664/1350	2347kg	260	4.0	-	187	296	21.6	+ Sublime quality, ridiculous pace, capable handling - Inert driving experience, SUV stigma	★★★★★
Bentley Mulsanne	178 F	£229,360	8/6752	505/4200	752/1750	2610kg	197	5.1	-	184	342	19.3	+ Drives like a modern Bentley should - Shame it doesn't look like one too	★★★★★
Bentley Mulsanne Speed	223 F	£252,000	8/6752	530/4200	811/1750	2610kg	206	4.8	-	190	342	19.3	+ Characterful; superb build quality - A bit pricey...	★★★★★
BMW 330d M Sport (F30)	180 D	£37,800	6/2993	254/4000	413/2000	1540kg	168	5.6	-	155	129	57.6	+ Great engine, fine handling, good value - Steering confuses weight with feel	★★★★★
BMW 340i M Sport Touring (F31)	228 D	£41,635	6/2998	321/5500	332/1380	1615kg	202	5.1	-	155	158	41.5	+ Feelsome rear-drive chassis - Easy to drive it beyond its comfort zone	★★★★★
BMW 320d (F30)	168 R	£12-15	4/1995	181/4000	280/1750	1495kg	123	7.4	-	146	120	61.4	+ Fleet-friendly new Three is economical yet entertaining - It's a tad noisy	★★★★★
BMW 328i (F30)	165 D	£11-15	4/1997	242/5000	258/1250	1430kg	172	5.8	-	155	149	44.8	+ New-age four-pot 328i is great all-rounder - We miss the six-cylinder soundtrack	★★★★★
BMW 435i Gran Coupe	203 D	£41,865	6/2979	302/5800	295/1200	1585kg	194	5.5	-	155	174	34.9	+ Superb straight-six, fine ride/handling balance - 335i saloon weighs and costs less	★★★★★
BMW M3 (F80)	211 R	£56,605	6/2979	425/5500	406/1850	1520kg	284	4.1	8.6	155	204	32.1	+ Looks, performance, practicality - Body control on rough roads; engine lacks character	★★★★★
BMW M3 (E90)	123 R	£08-11	8/3999	414/8300	295/3900	1605kg	262	4.9	10.7	165	290	22.8	+ Every bit as good as the E92 M3 coupe - No carbon roof	★★★★★
BMW M3 CRT (E90)	179 R	£11-12	8/4361	444/8300	324/3750	1580kg	285	4.4	-	180	295	-	+ Saloon chassis + weight savings + GTS engine = best E90 M3 - Just 67 were made	★★★★★
BMW M5 (F10M)	208 R	£73,985	8/4395	552/6000	501/1500	1870kg	300	4.3	-	155	232	28.5	+ Twin-turbocharging suits all-new M5 well - Can feel heavy at times	★★★★★
BMW M5 (E60)	129 R	£04-10	10/4999	500/7750	384/6100	1755kg	289	4.7	10.4	155	-	19.6	+ Close to being the ultimate supersaloon - SMG gearbox feels old-tech	★★★★★
BMW M5 (E39)	110 R	£99-03	8/4941	394/6600	369/3800	1795kg	223	4.9	11.5	155	-	-	+ Magnificent V8-engined supersaloon - We'd be nit-picking	★★★★★
BMW M5 (E34)	110 R	£92-96	6/3195	340/6900	295/4750	1653kg	209	5.9	13.6	155	-	-	+ The Godfather of supersaloons - The family can come too	★★★★★
BMW M5 (E28)	182 R	£86-88	6/3453	282/6500	251/4500	1431kg	200	6.2	-	151	-	-	+ The original storming saloon - Understated looks	★★★★★
BMW M6 Gran Coupe	190 D	£95,665	8/4395	552/6000	501/1500	1875kg	299	4.2	-	155	232	28.5	+ Enormous performance, stylish looks - Price tag looks silly next to rivals, M5 included	★★★★★
BMW X5 M50d	191 D	£65,240	6/2993	376/4000	546/2000	2190kg	155	5.3	-	155	173	42.8	+ Straight-line pace - Driving experience identical to standard X5, despite the M badge	★★★★★
BMW X6 M	212 D	£93,100	8/4395	567/6000	553/2200	2265kg	245	4.2	-	155	258	25.4	+ Big improvement on its predecessor - Coupe roofline still of questionable taste	★★★★★
BMW X6 M	134 D	£09-15	8/4395	547/6000	502/1500	2305kg	241	4.7	-	171	325	20.3	+ Fast, refined and comfortable - But it definitely lacks the M factor	★★★★★
Brabus Bullit	119 R	£633,000	12/6233	720/5100	811/2100	1850kg	395	3.8	-	217	-	-	+ Seven hundred and twenty bhp - Three hundred thousand pounds	★★★★★
Cadillac CTS-V	148 R	£67,030	8/6162	556/6100	551/3800	1928kg	293	3.9	-	191	365	18.1	+ It'll stand out among M-cars and AMGs - The novelty might wear off	★★★★★
Cadillac CTS3	226 D	£69,990	6/2997	411/5700	409/2500	1950kg	214	5.7	-	149	223	28.2	+ Caddy's S-class rival scores on comfort - But not on driver involvement	★★★★★
Honda Accord Type R	012 R	£98-03	4/2157	209/7200	158/6700	1306kg	163	6.1	17.4	142	-	29.4	+ One of the finest front-drivers of all time - Lack of image	★★★★★
Infiniti Q50S Hybrid	195 D	£39,995	6/3498	359/6800	402/5000	1750kg	208	5.1	-	155	144	45.6	+ Good powertrain, promising chassis - Lacklustre steering, strong rivals	★★★★★
Jaguar XE 2.0d AWD	227 D	£33,825	4/1999	178/4000	317/1750	1615kg	112	7.5	-	140	123	60.6	+ Great chassis gets more traction - Shame the engine isn't as polished	★★★★★
Jaguar XE S	213 D	£44,865	6/2995	335/6500	332/4500	1635kg	208	4.9	-	155	194	34.9	+ Neat handling, neat design - V6 loses appeal in the real world	★★★★★
Jaguar XF S	214 D	£49,945	6/2995	375/6500	332/4500	1710kg	223	5.0	-	155	198	34.0	+ Outstanding ride and handling balance - Engine lacks appeal	★★★★★
Jaguar XF S Diesel	219 D	£49,945	6/2993	296/4000	516/2000	1750kg	172	5.8	-	155	144	51.4	+ Great chassis, good looks, better engine than V6 petrol - It's still a diesel	★★★★★
Jaguar XFR	181 D	£09-15	8/5000	503/6000	461/2500	1800kg	284	4.8	10.2	155	270	24.4	+ Brilliant blend of pace and refinement - Doesn't sound as special as it is	★★★★★
Jaguar XFR-S	208 R	£13-15	8/5000	542/6500	501/2500	1800kg	306	4.4	-	186	270	24.4	+ XF gets turned up to 12 - Tyres aren't cheap	★★★★★
Jaguar XJ 3.0 V6 Diesel	148 D	£58,690	6/2993	271/4000	442/2000	1835kg	150	6.0	-	155	167	46.3	+ A great Jaguar - But not as great as the XJR...	★★★★★
Jaguar XJR	191 D	£91,755	8/5000	542/6500	502/2500	1875kg	294	4.4	-	174	270	24.4	+ Hot-rod vibe, fine cabin - Opinion-dividing looks	★★★★★
Jaguar F-Pace 3.0 V6 Supercharged	222 D	£65,275	6/2995	375/6500	332/4500	1884kg	202	5.1	-	155	209	57.7	+ A match for Porsche's SUVs - Supercharged V6 needs to be worked hard	★★★★★
Land Rover Discovery Sport	205 D	£32,395	4/2179	187/3500	310/1750	1863kg	100	9.8	-	117	159	46.3	+ Style, packaging, refinement - We can think of sportier vehicles	★★★★★
Lexus GS F	221 D	£69,995	8/4969	471/7100	391/4800	1790kg	267	4.6	-	168	260	25.2	+ Superb engine, exploitable chassis - Gearbox is off the pace	★★★★★
Lexus IS F	151 R	£07-12	8/4969	417/6600	372/5200	1714kg	247	4.7	10.9	173	270	24.4	+ Shockingly good Lexus - The M3's available as a (second hand) four-door too	★★★★★

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Lotus Carlton	170 R	'91-'93	6/3615	377/5200	419/4200	1658kg	231	4.8	10.6	176	-	17.0	+ The Millennium Falcon of saloon cars - Every drive a work-out	★★★★★
Maserati Ghibli	186 D	€52,615	6/2979	325/5000	406/1750	1810kg	182	5.6	-	163	223	29.4	+ Bursting with character; good value compared to Quattroporte - It's still a big car	★★★★★
Maserati Ghibli S	198 D	€63,760	6/2979	404/5500	406/1750	1810kg	227	5.0	-	177	242	27.2	+ Stands out from the crowd; sounds good too - Chassis lacks finesse, engine lacks reach	★★★★★
Maserati Quattroporte S	184 D	€80,115	6/2979	404/5500	406/1750	1860kg	221	5.1	-	177	242	27.2	+ Tempting alternative to V8 - Feel-free steering, ride lacks decorum	★★★★★
Maserati Quattroporte GTS	226 D	€110,405	8/3798	523/6800	479/2250	1900kg	280	4.7	-	193	250	26.4	+ Still pretty - Off the pace dynamically	★★★★★
Maserati Levante Diesel	221 D	€54,335	6/2897	271/4000	442/2000	2205kg	125	6.9	-	143	189	39.2	+ Impressive blend of ride and handling - Diesel performance is mild for a Maserati	★★★★★
Maserati Quattroporte S	137 R	'08-'12	8/4691	425/7000	361/4750	1990kg	216	5.1	12.1	174	365	18.0	+ A QP with the bhp it deserves - Grille is a bit Hannibal Lecter	★★★★★
Maserati Quattroporte Sport GTS	141 R	'08-'12	8/4691	433/7000	361/4750	1990kg	221	5.1	-	177	365	18.0	+ The most stylish supersaloon - Slightly wooden brakes, unforgiving ride	★★★★★
Maserati Quattroporte	085 R	'04-'08	8/4244	394/7000	333/4500	1930kg	207	5.1	-	171	-	17.9	+ Redefines big-car dynamics - Don't use auto mode	★★★★★
Mercedes-Benz 190E 2.5-16	185 F	'89-'92	4/2498	201/6750	177/5500	1360kg	147	7.2	-	142	-	24.4	+ M-B's M3 alternative - Not as nimble as the Beemer	★★★★★
Mercedes-Benz CLA45 AMG	186 D	€42,270	4/1991	355/6000	332/2250	1510kg	239	4.6	-	155	161	31.0	+ Strong performance, classy cabin - Pricy compared to A45 AMG hatchback	★★★★★
Mercedes-Benz GLA45 AMG	205 R	€44,595	4/1991	355/6000	332/2250	1510kg	239	4.8	-	155	175	31.7	+ An aggressive and focused sports crossover - Low on driver interaction	★★★★★
Mercedes-AMG C43 AMG Estate	228 D	€45,250	8/2996	362/5500	383/2000	1660kg	222	4.7	-	155	181	35.8	+ Incredibly fast and composed - Difficult to engage with	★★★★★
Mercedes-AMG C63	209 D	€59,800	8/3982	469/5500	479/1750	1640kg	291	4.1	-	155	192	34.5	+ Fast and feelsome - Lacks the ultimate finesse and response of the C63 S	★★★★★
Mercedes-AMG C63 Estate	216 R	€61,260	8/3982	469/5500	479/1750	1710kg	279	4.2	-	155	196	33.6	+ Much more fun than it looks - Gearbox dim-witted at low speeds	★★★★★
Mercedes-AMG C63 S	211 R	€66,545	8/3982	503/5500	516/1750	1655kg	309	4.0	-	155	192	34.5	+ Tremendous twin-turbo V8 power - Not quite as focused as an M division car	★★★★★
Mercedes-Benz C63 AMG	151 R	'07-'14	8/6208	451/6800	442/5000	1655kg	277	4.4	9.7	160	280	23.5	+ Monstrous pace and extremely engaging - Same-era M3 is just a little better...	★★★★★
Mercedes-Benz C55 AMG	088 R	'04-'08	8/5439	367/5250	376/4000	1635kg	228	5.2	-	155	-	23.7	+ Furiously fast, commendably discreet - Overshadowed by M3 and RS4	★★★★★
Mercedes-AMG E63	187 D	€74,115	8/5461	549/5500	531/1750	1770kg	315	4.2	-	155	230	28.8	+ Power, response and accuracy in spades - A little lacking in originality	★★★★★
Mercedes-AMG E63 S	208 R	€84,710	8/5461	571/5500	590/1750	1795kg	327	4.1	-	155	229	28.8	+ Effortless power; intuitive and approachable - Dim-witted auto 'box	★★★★★
Mercedes-Benz E63 AMG (W212)	165 R	'11-'13	8/5461	518/5250	516/1750	1765kg	298	4.2	-	155	230	28.8	+ Turbo engine doesn't dilute E63 experience - Sometimes struggles for traction...	★★★★★
Mercedes-Benz E63 AMG (W212)	134 D	'09-'11	8/6208	518/6800	465/5200	1765kg	298	4.5	-	155	295	22.4	+ As below, but with an extra 110hp and squarer headlights - Steering still vague	★★★★★
Mercedes-Benz E63 AMG (W211)	096 D	'06-'09	8/6208	507/6800	465/5200	1765kg	292	4.5	-	155	-	19.8	+ Brilliant engine, indulgent chassis - Vague steering, speed limits	★★★★★
Mercedes-Benz E55 AMG	052 R	'03-'06	8/5439	476/6100	516/2650	1760kg	271	4.8	10.2	155	-	21.9	+ M5-humbling grunt, cossetting ride - Speed limits	★★★★★
Mercedes-Benz S63 AMG L	191 D	€119,835	8/5461	571/5500	664/2250	1995kg	294	4.4	-	155	237	27.9	+ Monster pace - Average steering feel	★★★★★
Mercedes-Benz CLS63 AMG S	199 D	€86,500	8/5461	571/5500	590/1750	1795kg	327	4.1	-	155	231	28.5	+ Remains quick and characterful - Dated gearbox, no four-wheel drive option in the UK	★★★★★
Mercedes-Benz CLS63 AMG	178 R	'11-'14	8/5461	518/5250	516/1700	1795kg	293	4.2	-	155	231	28.5	+ Monster performance, 549bhp an option - Not as desirable as a Bentley or Aston	★★★★★
Mercedes-Benz S63 AMG	099 R	'06-'11	8/5406	507/6100	464/2650	1905kg	270	4.5	-	155	345	19.5	+ Beauty, comfort, awesome performance - M5 has the edge on B-roads	★★★★★
Mercedes-Benz GLE63 AMG S	218 D	€94,405	8/5461	571/5500	560/1750	2270kg	258	4.2	-	155	276	23.9	+ Stonking pace, extreme refinement - Feels remote	★★★★★
Mercedes-Benz GLE63 AMG S Coupe	213 D	€96,555	8/5461	571/5500	560/1750	2275kg	258	4.2	-	155	278	23.7	+ Subtler than an X6 M - More force than finesse	★★★★★
Mercedes-Benz ML63 AMG	176 R	€87,005	8/5461	518/5250	516/1750	2270kg	232	4.7	-	155	276	23.9	+ Great engine, surprisingly good dynamics - S85K buys a Boxster and an ML350...	★★★★★
Mercedes-Benz G63 AMG	172 D	€124,000	8/5461	537/5500	560/2000	2475kg	220	5.4	-	130	322	-	+ It exists; epic soundtrack - Ancient chassis, silly price	★★★★★
Mitsubishi Evo X FQ-300 SST	118 R	'08-'13	4/1998	290/6500	300/3500	1590kg	185	5.2	13.9	155	256	26.2	+ Evo gets twin-clutch transmission - Not as exciting as it used to be	★★★★★
Mitsubishi Evo X FQ-360	122 D	'08-'13	4/1998	354/6500	363/3500	1560kg	231	4.1	-	155	328	19.9	+ Ridiculously rapid new Evo - A five-speed gearbox?	★★★★★
Mitsubishi Evo X FQ-330 SST	134 R	'08-'12	4/1998	324/6500	322/3500	1590kg	207	4.4	-	155	256	-	+ Great engine and gearbox combo - It still lives in the shadow of the Evo IX	★★★★★
Mitsubishi Evo X FQ-400	181 R	'09-'10	4/1998	403/6500	387/3500	1560kg	262	3.8	-	155	328	-	+ Most powerful factory Evo ever... - about X grand too much when new	★★★★★
Mitsubishi Evo IX FQ-360	088 R	'05-'07	4/1997	345/6800	321/4600	1400kg	250	4.3	10.9	157	-	-	+ Gives Porsche drivers nightmares - Points. Lots of	★★★★★
Mitsubishi Evo IX MR FQ-360	181 R	'05-'07	4/1997	366/6887	363/3200	1400kg	266	3.9	-	157	-	-	+ Well-executed engine upgrades - Prison food	★★★★★
Mitsubishi Evo VIII	055 R	'03-'04	4/1997	276/6500	289/3500	1410kg	199	5.1	-	157	-	-	+ The Evo grows up - Brakes need beefing up	★★★★★
Mitsubishi Evo VIII MR FQ-300	057 R	'03-'05	4/1997	305/6800	289/3500	1400kg	221	4.8	-	157	-	20.5	+ Extra pace, extra attitude - Extra money	★★★★★
Mitsubishi Evo VII	031 R	'02-'03	4/1997	276/6500	282/3500	1360kg	206	5.0	13.0	140	-	20.4	+ Terrific all-rounder - You tell us	★★★★★
Mitsubishi Evo VI Mäkinen Edition	200 R	'00-'01	4/1997	276/6500	275/2750	1365kg	205	4.6	-	150	-	-	+ Our favourite Evo - Subtle it is not	★★★★★
Porsche Panamera Turbo	227 D	€113,975	8/3996	542/5750	568/1960	1995kg	276	3.6	-	190	212	30.4	+ Searing pace with body control that's a real step up; superb rear wing, too - Still very heavy	★★★★★
Porsche Panamera GTS	208 R	'11-'16	8/4806	434/6700	383/3500	1925kg	229	4.4	-	178	249	26.4	+ Vivacious V8, entertaining balance - Can feel light on performance next to turbo'd rivals	★★★★★
Porsche Panamera Turbo	137 R	'10-'16	8/4806	493/6000	516/2250	1970kg	254	3.6	8.9	188	270	24.6	+ Fast, refined and dynamically sound - It still leaves us cold	★★★★★
Porsche Panamera Turbo S	159 D	'11-'13	8/4806	542/6000	590/2250	1995kg	276	3.7	-	190	270	24.6	+ Pace, excellent ergonomics - Steering feel, ride	★★★★★
Porsche Macan S	205 R	€43,648	6/2997	335/5500	339/1450	1865kg	183	5.4	-	157	204	31.4	+ No less compelling than the Turbo - Although lacks its ultimate speed and agility	★★★★★
Porsche Macan GTS	217 D	€55,188	6/2997	355/6000	369/1650	1895kg	190	5.2	-	159	212	30.7	+ Handles like an SUV shouldn't - Still looks like an SUV	★★★★★
Porsche Macan Turbo	207 D	€59,648	6/3604	394/6000	406/1350	1925kg	208	4.5	11.1	165	208	30.7	+ Doesn't feel like an SUV - Not a match for a proper sports saloon	★★★★★
Porsche Cayenne GTS (Mk2, V6)	211 D	€72,523	6/3604	434/6000	442/1600	2110kg	209	5.2	-	163	228	28.3	+ The driver's Cayenne... - but why would a driver want an SUV?	★★★★★
Porsche Cayenne GTS (Mk2, V8)	173 D	'12-'15	8/4806	414/6500	380/3500	2085kg	202	5.6	-	162	251	26.4	+ Dynamically the best SUV of its era - At two tons, it's still no sports car	★★★★★
Porsche Cayenne Turbo (Mk2)	212 D	€93,574	8/4806	513/6000	533/2250	2185kg	239	4.5	-	173	261	25.2	+ Remarkable performance, handling, completeness - Vague steering, dated engine	★★★★★
Porsche Cayenne Turbo S (Mk2)	184 D	€118,455	8/4806	562/6000	590/2500	2235kg	255	4.1	-	176	267	24.6	+ More power and torque than a Zonda S 7.3 - In an SUV	★★★★★
Range Rover Evoque Coupe Si4	160 D	€46,660	4/1999	237/6000	251/1900	1670kg	144	7.0	-	135	199	-	+ Striking looks, sporting dynamics - Hefty price, and petrol version is auto-only	★★★★★
Range Rover Sport SDV8	222 FF	€84,350	8/4367	334/3500	546/1750	2359kg	144	6.5	-	140	219	33.6	+ A brilliant long-distance machine - Doesn't live up to the 'Sport' branding	★★★★★
Range Rover Sport V8 Supercharged	186 D	€84,350	8/5000	503/6000	460/2500	2335kg	219	5.0	-	155	298	21.7	+ Deceptively quick and capable sports SUV - It's still got a weight problem	★★★★★
Range Rover Sport SVR	212 D	€95,150	8/5000	542/6000	501/3500	2355kg	236	4.5	-	162	298	21.7	+ Characterful drivetrain; genuine off-road ability - Not a match for its rivals on the road	★★★★★
Range Rover SDV8	180 D	€80,850	8/4367	334/3500	516/1750	2360kg	144	6.5	-	140	229	32.5	+ Lighter, more capable, even more luxurious - Diesel V6 model feels more alert	★★★★★
Rolls-Royce Ghost	186 D	€216,864	12/6592	563/5250	575/1500	2360kg	242	4.7	-	155	317	20.8	+ It's quicker than you think - It's more enjoyable driven slowly	★★★★★
Rolls-Royce Phantom	054 R	€310,200	12/6749	453/5350	531/3500	2560kg	180	5.7	-	149	377	18.0	+ Rolls reinvented for the 21st Century - The roads are barely big enough	★★★★★
Subaru WRX STI	201 R	€28,995	4/2457	296/6000	300/4000	1534kg	196	5.2	-	158	242	27.2	+ Fast Subaru saloon returns (again) - Without a power increase	★★★★★
Subaru WRX STI	151 D	'10-'13	4/2457	296/6000	300/4000	1505kg	200	5.1	-	158	243	26.9	+ Fast Subaru saloon returns - Without the blue paint and gold wheels	★★★★★
Subaru Impreza WRX GB270	109 D	'07	4/2457	266/5700	310/3000	1410kg	192	5.2	-	143	-	-	+ Fitting final fling for 'classic' Impreza - End of an era	★★★★★
Subaru Impreza STI	090 R	'05-'07	4/2457	276/6000	289/4000	1495kg	188	5.3	-	158	-	25.9	+ Stunning to drive - Not so stunning to look at	★★★★★
Subaru Impreza RB320	105 R	'07	4/2457	316/6000	332/3750	1495kg	215	4.8	-	155	-	-	+ Fitting tribute to a rallying legend - Too hardcore for some?	★★★★★
Subaru Impreza WRX STI PPP	073 R	'03-'05	4/1994	300/6000	299/4000	1470kg	207	5.2	12.9	148	-	-	+ A Subaru with real edge - Bit too edgy in the wet	★★★★★
Subaru Impreza Turbo	011 R	'98-'00	4/1994	215/5600	214/4000	1235kg	177	5.4	14.6	144	-	27.2	+ Destined for classic status - Thirsty	★★★★★
Subaru Impreza PI	200 R	'00-'01	4/1994	276/6500	260/4000	1283kg	219	4.9	13.3	150	-	25.0	+ One of our favourite Imprezas - Doesn't come cheap	★★★★★
Subaru Impreza RB5 (PPP)	187 R	'99	4/1994	237/6000	258/3500	1235kg	195	5.0	14.1	143	-	-	+ Perfect blend of poise and power - Limited numbers	★★★★★
Subaru Impreza 22B	188 R	'98-'99	4/2212	276/6000	265/3200	1270kg	220							

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OUR CHOICE

Lotus 3-Eleven. It may not be groundbreaking but it is hugely exciting. The V6 sounds fabulous and the open linkage on the manual gearbox looks fantastic. A circuit is obviously its natural habitat but it has surprisingly civilised road manners, so you could happily drive to and from a trackday in it.



BEST OF THE REST

Porsche's 718 Boxster S (left) has lost considerable character and desirability with the switch to four cylinders, but its performance and handling are still exemplary. Jaguar's F-type impresses as both V6 or V8, while an Ariel Atom or Caterham Seven offer an even more extreme alternative to the 3-Eleven.

	ISSUE NO.	PRICE	ENGINE CYL/CC	BHP/RPM	LB FT/RPM	WEIGHT	BHP/TON	0-60MPH	0-100MPH	MAX MPH	GDC G/KM	EC MPG	EVO RATING	
Abarth 124 Spider	225 D	£29,850	4/1368	168/5500	184/2500	1060kg	161	6.8	-	143	148	44.1	★ Predictable and fun rear end - Vague and lifeless front end	★★★★★
Alfa Romeo 4C Spider	223 R	£60,255	4/1742	237/6000	258/2200	940kg	256	4.5	-	160	161	40.9	★ Stunningly beautiful; better steering than coupe - Still has the coupe's other foibles	★★★★★
Alfa Romeo 8C Spider	161 R	09-11	8/4691	450/7000	354/4750	1675kg	273	4.5	-	181	-	-	★ Beauty meets beast. They hit it off - Boot is useless for touring	★★★★★
Alpina B4 Biturbo Convertible	212 D	£54,950	6/2993	345/4000	516/1500	1815kg	193	5.0	-	171	156	47.9	★ As much torque as a 997 Turbo - A diesel convertible wouldn't be our choice of Alpina	★★★★★
Alpina B4 Biturbo Convertible	227 D	£62,950	6/2979	404/5500	442/3000	1840kg	223	4.5	-	187	186	35.3	★ A great GT - Not as exciting to drive as the numbers may suggest	★★★★★
Ariel Atom 3.5 Supercharged	180 D	£38,000	4/1998	310/8400	169/7200	550kg	573	2.7	-	155	-	-	★ As mad as ever - Rain	★★★★★
Ariel Atom 3.5R	205 R	£64,800	4/1998	350/8400	243/6100	550kg	647	2.6	-	155	-	-	★ Remarkable balance, poise and pace - Pricey	★★★★★
Ariel Atom 3 245	113 D	08-12	4/1998	245/8200	155/5200	500kg	498	3.2	-	150	-	33.0	★ The Atom just got a little bit better - Can still be a bit draughty...	★★★★★
Ariel Atom 3 Supercharged	138 R	09-12	4/1998	300/8200	162/7200	550kg	554	3.3	-	155	-	-	★ It's brilliant - It's mental	★★★★★
Ariel Atom Mugen	165 R	12-13	4/1998	270/8300	188/6000	550kg	499	2.9	-	150	-	-	★ Perfect engine for the Atom's chassis - Only ten were made	★★★★★
Ariel Atom V8 500	165 R	10-12	8/3000	475/10,500	284/7750	550kg	877	3.0	5.8	170	-	-	★ An experience unlike anything else on Planet Car - £150K for an Atom	★★★★★
Ariel Nomad	210 R	£33,000	4/2354	235/7200	221/4300	670kg	365	3.4	-	134	-	-	★ Off-road capabilities make for a super plaything - No Bluetooth	★★★★★
Aston Martin V8 Vantage Roadster	130 R	£89,994	8/4735	420/7000	346/5750	1700kg	250	4.7	-	180	328	20.4	★ Sportiest, coolest drop-top Aston in years - Starting to feel its age	★★★★★
Aston Martin V8 Vantage S Roadster	161 R	£108,995	8/4735	430/7300	361/5000	1690kg	258	4.6	-	189	299	21.9	★ Sounds amazing, looks even better - Still not the best drop-top in its class	★★★★★
Aston Martin V12 Vantage S Roadster	212 R	£417,000	12/5935	565/6750	451/5750	1745kg	329	4.1	-	201	343	19.2	★ A brilliant two-seat roadster... - Let down by a frustrating gearbox	★★★★★
Aston Martin V12 Vantage Roadster	175 R	12-14	12/5935	510/6500	420/5750	1700kg	294	4.4	-	190	-	-	★ As good as the coupe, with amplified V12 rumble - Just a smidgen shakier	★★★★★
Aston Martin DB9 Volante	150 D	05-12	12/5935	470/6000	443/5000	1815kg	263	4.6	-	190	368	18.2	★ Consummate cruiser and capable when pushed - Roof-up wind noise	★★★★★
Aston Martin DBS Volante	133 D	09-12	12/5935	510/6500	420/5750	1800kg	286	4.3	-	191	388	17.3	★ A feel-good car par excellence - It's a bit of a heavyweight	★★★★★
Audi TTS Roadster	207 D	£41,085	4/1984	306/5800	280/1800	1450kg	214	5.2	-	155	169	38.7	★ A serious proposition, ranking close behind a Boxster S - Coupe still looks better	★★★★★
Audi TTS Roadster	122 D	08-14	4/1984	268/6000	258/2500	1455kg	187	5.6	-	155	189	34.9	★ Effortlessly quick - Long-term appeal open to question	★★★★★
Audi TT RS Roadster	133 D	09-14	5/2480	335/5400	150kg	225	4.7	-	-	155	212	31.0	★ Terrific engine... - is the best thing about it	★★★★★
Audi S5 Cabriolet	130 D	£46,770	6/2995	328/5500	325/2900	1875kg	178	5.6	-	155	199	33.2	★ Gets the S4's trick supercharged engine - Bordering on dull	★★★★★
Audi R8 V8 Spyder	186 D	11-15	8/4163	424/7900	317/6000	1660kg	259	4.8	-	187	337	19.6	★ More delicate and subtle than the V10 - The V10 sounds even better	★★★★★
BAC Mono	189 R	£124,255	4/2261	280/7700	206/6000	540kg	527	2.8	-	170	-	-	★ The most single-minded track car available - That means no passengers...	★★★★★
Bentley Continental GT V8 Convertible	168 R	£150,200	8/3993	500/6000	487/1700	2395kg	212	4.7	-	187	254	25.9	★ One of the world's best topless GTs - Still no sports car	★★★★★
Bentley Continental GT V8 S Convertible	194 D	£160,500	8/3993	521/6000	502/1700	2395kg	221	4.5	-	191	258	25.4	★ A true drivers' Bentley - Excessively heavy; feels like it could give more	★★★★★
Bentley Conti GT Speed Convertible	187 D	£181,000	12/5998	626/6000	605/1700	2420kg	263	4.1	-	203	347	19.0	★ Effortless performance, style - Running costs a tad on the high side	★★★★★
BMW M235i Convertible	207 D	£37,710	6/2979	321/5800	332/1300	1600kg	204	5.2	-	155	199	33.2	★ Neat styling; great drivetrain - Loss of dynamic ability compared with coupe	★★★★★
BMW Z4 sDrive 35i M Sport (Mk2)	186 D	£43,005	6/2979	302/5800	295/1300	1505kg	204	5.2	-	155	219	30.1	★ Looks, hard-top versatility, drivetrain - Clumsy chassis is upset by ragged surfaces	★★★★★
BMW Z4 3.0si (Mk1)	094 D	06-09	6/2996	265/6600	232/2750	1310kg	205	5.7	-	155	-	32.9	★ Terrific straight-six - Handling not as playful as we'd like	★★★★★
BMW Z4 M Roadster	091 R	06-09	6/3246	338/7900	269/4900	1410kg	244	4.8	-	155	-	23.3	★ Exhilarating and characterful, that engine - Stiff suspension	★★★★★
BMW M Roadster	002 R	98-02	6/3246	325/7400	258/4900	1375kg	240	5.3	-	155	-	25.4	★ Fresh-air M3, that motor, hunky looks - M Coupe drives better	★★★★★
BMW M3 Convertible	194 D	£45,680	6/2979	302/5800	295/1200	1740kg	176	5.6	-	155	190	34.8	★ Impressive chassis, smart looks, neat roof - Extra weight, not as composed as coupe	★★★★★
BMW M4 Convertible (F83)	202 D	£61,145	6/2979	425/5500	406/1850	1750kg	247	4.6	-	155	213	31.0	★ As good as fast four-seat drop-tops get... - but still not as good as a coupe or saloon	★★★★★
BMW Z6	026 R	00-03	8/4941	400/6600	369/3800	1585kg	256	4.8	11.1	155	-	14.4	★ M5-powered super-sportster - M5's more fun to drive	★★★★★
Caterham Seven 160	205 R	£19,710	4/660	80/7000	79/3400	490kg	166	6.9	-	100	-	-	★ The fabulous Seven formula at its most basic - Gets pricey with options	★★★★★
Caterham Seven 270	219 R	£23,795	4/1596	135/6800	122/4100	540kg	254	5.0	-	122	-	-	★ Feisty engine, sweetly balanced, manic and exciting - The temptation of more power	★★★★★
Caterham Seven 310R	227 D	£24,995	4/1596	152/7000	124/5600	540kg	286	4.8	-	126	-	-	★ Intense and exciting - Sticky tyres limit the amount of throttle adjustability	★★★★★
Caterham Seven 360	209 R	£27,795	4/1999	180/7300	143/6100	560kg	327	4.8	-	130	-	-	★ Extra power is welcome - You'll need the six-speed gearbox to make the most of it	★★★★★
Caterham Seven 420	223 R	£30,795	4/1999	210/7600	150/6300	560kg	381	4.0	10.3	136	-	-	★ It's the one we built for ourselves - Trickier on the limit than lesser-powered Sevens	★★★★★
Caterham Seven 620S	220 D	£44,995	4/1999	310/7700	219/7350	610kg	516	3.4	-	155	-	-	★ Ludicrous, near-620R pace, with added habitability - Well, 'habitable' for a Seven...	★★★★★
Caterham Seven 620R	187 R	£50,795	4/1999	310/7700	219/7350	572kg	551	2.8	-	155	-	-	★ Banzi on track, yet still relevant on the road - £50k for a Seven?	★★★★★
Caterham Seven CSR	094 R	£47,295	4/2261	256/7500	200/6200	565kg	460	3.8	-	155	-	-	★ Brilliant for high days, holidays and trackdays - Wet Wednesdays	★★★★★
Caterham Seven Supersport 125	105 R	07-14	4/1596	125/6100	120/5350	539kg	235	5.9	-	112	-	-	★ Great debut for new Ford-engined model - Bigger drivers need SV model	★★★★★
Caterham Seven Supersport	165 R	11-14	4/1596	140/6900	120/5790	520kg	273	4.9	-	120	-	-	★ One of the best Caterhams is also one of the cheapest of its era - It's quite minimalist	★★★★★
Caterham Seven Supersport R	180 D	13-14	4/1999	180/7300	143/6100	535kg	342	4.8	-	130	-	-	★ One of the best road-and-track Sevens - Impractical, noisy, uncomfortable	★★★★★
Caterham Seven Superlight R300	150 R	09-12	4/1999	175/7000	139/6000	515kg	345	4.5	-	140	-	-	★ Possibly all the Caterham you need - They're not cheap	★★★★★
Caterham Seven Superlight R500	123 R	08-14	4/1999	263/8500	177/7200	506kg	528	2.9	-	150	-	-	★ Better power-to-weight ratio than a Veyron - Until you add the driver	★★★★★
Caterham Levante	131 R	09-10	8/2398	550/10000	300/8500	520kg	1074	4.8	8.2	150	-	-	★ Twice the power-to-weight ratio of a Veyron! - Not easy to drive slowly	★★★★★
Caterham Seven R300	068 R	02-06	4/1796	160/7000	130/5000	500kg	325	4.7	-	130	-	-	★ Our 2002 Trackday Car of the Year - Not for wimps	★★★★★
Caterham Seven R500	200 R	09-06	4/1796	230/8600	155/7200	460kg	510	3.6	8.8	146	-	-	★ The K-series Seven at its very best - No cup holders	★★★★★
Ferrari California T	229 D	£155,254	8/3855	553/7500	557/4750	1729kg	324	3.6	-	196	250	26.9	★ Turbocharged engine is a triumph - Still places daily usability above outright thrills	★★★★★
Ferrari California	171 D	08-14	8/4297	483/7750	372/5000	1735kg	283	3.8	-	193	299	-	★ Revised with sharper performance and dynamics - We'd still take a 458 Spider	★★★★★
Fiat 124 Spider	228 R	£19,545	4/1368	138/5000	117/2250	1050kg	134	7.5	-	134	148	44.1	★ It's an affordable Italian(ish) sports car - Lacks Italian brio	★★★★★
Honda S2000	118 D	99-09	4/1997	237/8300	153/7500	1260kg	191	6.2	-	150	-	28.2	★ An alternative and rev-happy roadster - The Boxster's better	★★★★★
Jaguar F-type Convertible	186 R	£56,745	6/2995	335/6500	332/3500	1587kg	214	5.5	-	161	234	28.8	★ Beautiful, enjoyable, responsive - Noticeably junior to the V6 S	★★★★★
Jaguar F-type S Convertible	183 R	£65,745	6/2995	375/6500	339/3500	1604kg	238	5.3	-	171	234	28.8	★ Better-damped and more rounded than the V8 S - A Boxster S is £20k cheaper	★★★★★
Jaguar F-type R Convertible	-	£92,295	8/5000	542/6500	501/3500	1665kg	331	4.0	-	186	255	26.4	★ Pace, characterful V8 - Costs £25k more than the S	★★★★★
Jaguar F-type Project 7	212 R	15	8/5000	567/6500	501/2500	1585kg	363	3.9	-	186	-	-	★ Noise, performance, adjustability - Expensive, and not the GT3 rival we would have liked	★★★★★
Jaguar F-type V8 S Convertible	183 R	13-14	8/5000	488/6500	461/2500	1665kg	298	4.3	-	186	259	25.5	★ Wilder than the V6 S - Could be too exuberant for some	★★★★★
Jaguar XKR Convertible	130 R	09-14	8/5000	503/6000	461/2500	1725kg	296	4.6	-	155	292	23.0	★ Fantastic 5-litre V8 - Loses sporting ground to its main foes	★★★★★
Jaguar XKR-S Convertible	167 R	11-14	8/5000	542/6500	502/2500	1725kg	319	4.2	-	186	292	23.0	★ Loud and mad; most exciting Jag in years - It was also the most expensive in years	★★★★★
KTM X-Bow GT	183 D	£95,880	4/1984	281/6400	310/3200	875kg	326	4.1	-	144	189	34.0	★ Extraordinary ability, now in a more road-friendly package - Price	★★★★★
KTM X-Bow R	165 R	£87,480	4/1984	296/5500	295/3300	818kg	368	3.6	-	144	-	-	★ Sharper handling, more power - Pity it's not even lighter, and cheaper	★★★★★
KTM X-Bow	138 R	08-12	4/1984	237/5500	229/2000	818kg	294	3.8	-	137	-	-	★ Mad looks, real quality feel - Heavier and pricier than you'd hope	★★★★★
Lotus Elise Sport	-	£35,880	4/1598	134/6800	118/4400	866kg	157	6.0	-	127	149	45.0	★ 1.6-litre Elise is light and fantastic - Smaller engine could put some off	★★★★★
Lotus Elise Sport 220	-	£43,800	4/1798	217/6800	184/4600	924kg	239	4.2	-	145	173	37.7	★ Epic grip and pace - £43k for an Elise?	★★★★★

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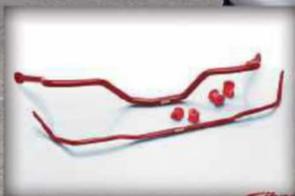


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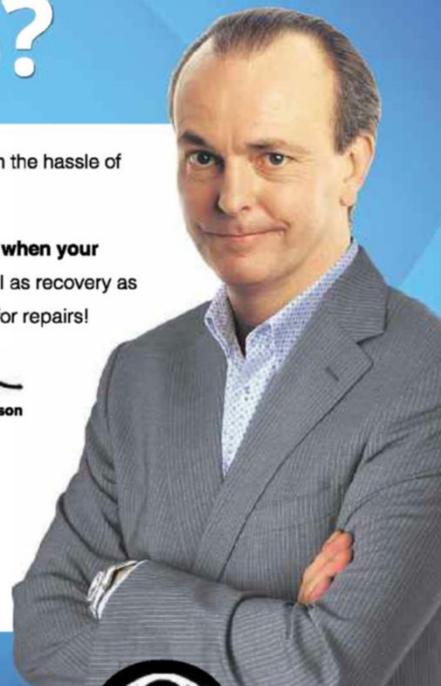
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	ISSUE NO.	PRICE	ENGINE CYL/CC	BHP/RPM	LB FT/RPM	WEIGHT	BHP/TON	0-60MPH	0-100MPH	MAX MPH	CO2 G/KM	EC MPG	EVO RATING	
Lotus Elise Cup 250	224 R	£45,600	4/1798	243/7200	184/3500	931kg	265	3.9	-	154	175	37.7	+ Quickest Elise yet - Prioritises grip over adjustability	★★★★★
Lotus Elise 1.6 Club Racer	183 R	11-15	4/1598	134/6800	118/4400	852kg	160	6.0	-	127	149	45.0	+ Even lighter, even more focused - Are you prepared to go this basic?	★★★★★
Lotus Elise S Club Racer	189 D	13-15	4/1798	217/6800	184/4600	905kg	244	4.2	-	145	175	37.5	+ Purist approach intensifies ability - Lightest, option-free spec requires commitment	★★★★★
Lotus Elise R	068 R	04-11	4/1796	189/7800	133/6800	860kg	223	5.6	13.9	150	196	34.4	+ Most thrilling Elise yet - Blaring engine note	★★★★★
Lotus Elise SC	131 R	08-11	4/1794	218/8000	156/5000	870kg	254	4.5	11.4	148	199	33.2	+ All the usual Elise magic - Supercharged engine lacks sparkle	★★★★★
Lotus Elise S 18	104 R	06-10	4/1794	134/6200	127/4200	860kg	158	6.3	18.7	127	-	37.2	+ Brilliant entry-level Elise - Precious little	★★★★★
Lotus Elise 111S	049 R	02-04	4/1796	156/7000	129/4650	860kg	199	5.1	-	131	-	40.9	+ A genuinely useable Elise - Air-con? In an Elise?	★★★★★
Lotus Elise Sport 135	040 D	03	4/1796	135/6200	129/4850	726kg	187	5.4	-	129	-	-	+ One of our fave S2 Elises - Brakes need more bite and pedal feel	★★★★★
Lotus Elise Sport 190	044 R	03	4/1796	190/7800	128/5000	710kg	272	4.7	12.1	135	-	-	+ Fabulous trackday tool - Pricey	★★★★★
Lotus Elise (S1)	126 R	96-01	4/1796	118/5500	122/3000	731kg	164	6.1	18.5	126	-	39.4	+ A modern classic - A tad impractical?	★★★★★
Lotus Exige Sport 350 Roadster	-	£55,900	6/3456	345/7000	295/4500	1125kg	312	3.7	-	145	235	28.0	+ An Exige with added sunny-day appeal - A Boxster would be a better everyday bet	★★★★★
Lotus Exige S Roadster	186 R	13-15	6/3456	345/7000	295/4500	1166kg	301	3.8	-	145	235	28.0	+ Like the hard-top Exige S, but more road-friendly - 981 Boxster S is a better all-rounder	★★★★★
Lotus 3-Eleven	220 R	£82,500	6/3456	410/7000	302/3000	925kg	450	3.3	-	174	-	-	+ A fantastically exciting Lotus - If not exactly a groundbreaking one	★★★★★
Lotus 2-Eleven	126 R	07-11	4/1796	189/7800	133/6800	720kg	267	4.3	-	140	-	-	+ Not far off supercharged car's pace - Pricey once it's made road-legal	★★★★★
Lotus 2-Eleven Supercharged	123 R	07-11	4/1796	252/8000	179/7000	670kg	382	3.8	-	150	-	-	+ Impressive on road and track - Not hardcore enough for some	★★★★★
Lotus 2-Eleven GT4	138 R	09-11	4/1796	266/8200	179/7200	670kg	403	3.7	-	155	-	-	+ eva Track Car of the Year 2009 - It's a 76-grand Lotus with no roof	★★★★★
Lotus 340R	126 R	00	4/1796	190/7800	146/5000	658kg	293	4.5	12.5	126	-	-	+ Hardcore road-racer... - that looks like a dune buggy from Mars	★★★★★
Lotus Elan SE	095 R	89-95	4/1588	165/6600	148/4200	1022kg	166	6.7	-	137	-	21.0	+ Awesome front-drive chassis - Rather uninvolved	★★★★★
Maserati GranCabrio	142 D	£98,940	8/4691	434/7000	332/4750	1980kg	223	5.2	-	177	337	19.5	+ As good to drive as it is to look at - Lacks the grunt of some rivals	★★★★★
Maserati GranCabrio Sport	161 D	£104,535	8/4691	444/7000	376/4750	1980kg	228	5.0	-	177	377	19.5	+ Looks, performance, cruising ability - Brakes could be sharper	★★★★★
Maserati GranCabrio MC	185 D	£112,370	8/4691	454/7000	383/4750	1973kg	234	4.9	-	179	337	19.5	+ Most powerful GranCabrio yet - The GranCabrio is starting to show its age	★★★★★
Mazda MX-5 2.0i Sport (Mk4)	228 R	£22,505	4/1998	158/6000	147/4600	1000kg	161	7.3	-	133	161	40.9	+ Lightest MX-5 since the Mk1 - Lacks intensity	★★★★★
Mazda MX-5 2.0i Sport Tech (Mk3.5)	212 R	09-15	4/1999	158/7000	139/5000	1098kg	146	7.6	-	138	181	36.0	+ Handles brilliantly again; folding hard-top also available - Less than macho image	★★★★★
Mazda MX-5 1.8i (Mk3)	091 R	05-09	4/1798	124/6500	123/4500	1080kg	108	9.3	-	122	-	-	+ Gearchange, interior - Lost some of the charm of old MX-5; dubious handling	★★★★★
Mazda MX-5 1.8i (Mk2)	017 R	98-05	4/1839	146/7000	124/5000	1065kg	140	8.6	-	123	-	32.5	+ Affordable ragtop don't get much better - Cheap cabin	★★★★★
Mazda MX-5 1.6 (Mk1)	131 R	89-97	4/1597	115/6500	100/5500	971kg	120	9.0	-	114	-	-	+ The original and still (pretty much) the best - Less than rigid	★★★★★
Mercedes-AMG SL C43	222 D	£45,950	6/2996	362/5500	383/2000	1520kg	242	4.7	-	155	178	26.2	+ Twin-turbo V6 well-suited to baby roadster - But also highlights the chassis' age	★★★★★
Mercedes-Benz SLK 55 AMG	186 R	12-15	8/5461	416/6800	398/4500	1615kg	262	4.6	-	155	195	33.6	+ Quicker and more economical than ever - Needs to be sharper, too	★★★★★
Mercedes-Benz SLK 55 AMG	087 R	05-10	8/5439	355/5750	376/4000	1575kg	229	4.9	-	155	-	23.5	+ Superb engine, responsive chassis - No manual option, ESP spoils fun	★★★★★
Mercedes-Benz SLK 55 AMG Black Series	110 R	07-08	8/5439	394/5750	383/3750	1495kg	268	4.9	11.2	174	-	-	+ AMG gets serious - Dull-witted TG-Tronic auto box, uneven dynamics	★★★★★
Mercedes-AMG C63 S Cabriolet	226 D	£68,115	8/3982	503/5500	516/1750	1850kg	276	4.1	-	155	208	31.7	+ A born hooligan - Body flex takes away some control	★★★★★
Mercedes-AMG SL 63	228 D	£114,115	8/5461	571/5500	664/2250	1770kg	331	4.1	-	155	234	28.0	+ Effortless performance - Needs more involvement to go with the pace	★★★★★
Mercedes-Benz SL 500	169 D	12-16	8/4663	429/5250	516/1800	1710kg	255	4.6	-	155	212	31.0	+ Wafty performance, beautifully engineered - Lacks ultimate sports car feel	★★★★★
Mercedes-Benz SL 63 AMG	171 D	12-16	8/5461	530/5500	590/2000	1770kg	304	4.3	-	155	231	-	+ Monster performance, lighter than before - Still heavy, steering lacks consistency	★★★★★
Mercedes-Benz SL 65 AMG	183 D	13-16	12/5980	621/4800	737/2300	1875kg	336	4.0	-	155	270	24.4	+ Chassis just about deals with the power - Speed limits	★★★★★
Mercedes-Benz SL 63 AMG	117 D	08-13	8/6208	518/6800	464/5200	1970kg	278	4.6	-	155	328	20.0	+ More focused than old SL 55 AMG - Lost some of its all-round appeal	★★★★★
Mercedes-Benz SL 65 AMG	071 D	04-10	12/5980	604/4800	737/2000	2035kg	302	4.1	-	155	-	-	+ Gob-smacking performance - Gob-smackingly pricey	★★★★★
Mercedes-Benz SLS AMG Roadster	167 R	12-14	8/6208	563/6800	479/4750	1660kg	345	3.7	-	197	308	21.4	+ Loses none of the coupe's talents - But (understandably) loses the gullwing doors	★★★★★
Morgan 3 Wheeler	198 R	£31,140	2/1976	82/5250	103/3250	525kg	159	6.0	-	115	215	30.3	+ Quirky, characterful, brilliant - Can become a two-wheeler if you push too hard	★★★★★
Morgan Plus 8 Speedster	202 R	£71,140	8/4799	362/6300	370/3600	1000kg	368	4.2	-	148	282	23.3	+ Fantastic old-school roadster experience - Gets unsettled by big bumps	★★★★★
Morgan Plus 8	171 R	£86,345	8/4799	362/6300	370/3600	1100kg	334	4.4	-	155	256	25.7	+ Hilarious mix of old looks and new mechanicals - Refinement is definitely old-school	★★★★★
Morgan Aero SuperSports	145 R	£128,045	8/4799	362/6300	370/3600	1180kg	312	4.2	-	170	-	-	+ As above, with a V8 and target top - It's proper supercar money	★★★★★
Morgan Aero 8	105 R	02-08	8/4799	362/6300	361/3400	1100kg	334	4.5	-	170	-	25.2	+ Glorious sound, view over bonnet, dynamics - Awkward-looking rear	★★★★★
Nissan 370Z Roadster	143 R	10-14	6/3696	326/7000	269/5200	1554kg	213	5.5	-	155	262	25.2	+ The Zed's old-school character remains intact - Its purposeful looks don't	★★★★★
Porsche 718 Boxster	224 D	£41,739	4/1988	296/6500	280/1950	1335kg	225	5.1	-	170	168	38.2	+ Chassis as good as ever - Four-cylinder's tuneless din would be hard to live with	★★★★★
Porsche 718 Boxster S	222 R	£50,695	4/2497	345/6500	310/1900	1355kg	259	4.4	9.8	177	184	34.9	+ Still sensationally capable - Turbo four-cylinder engine lacks appeal of the old flat-six	★★★★★
Porsche Boxster (981)	172 R	12-16	6/2706	261/6700	206/4500	1310kg	202	5.4	-	164	192	34.5	+ Goes and looks better - Shame about the electric steering	★★★★★
Porsche Boxster S (981)	186 R	12-16	6/3436	311/6700	265/4500	1320kg	239	5.1	-	173	206	32.1	+ Boxster steps out of 911's shadow - But gets 911's less appealing electric steering	★★★★★
Porsche Boxster GTS (981)	203 D	14-16	6/3436	325/6700	273/4500	1345kg	246	5.0	-	174	211	31.4	+ Superb dynamics, fantastic engine, great looks - Sport suspension is very firm	★★★★★
Porsche Boxster Spyder (981)	2123 R	15-16	6/3800	370/6700	310/4750	1315kg	286	4.5	-	180	230	28.5	+ The fastest, most rewarding Boxster yet - Feedback trails the Cayman GT4's	★★★★★
Porsche Boxster S (987)	161 R	05-12	6/3436	306/6400	265/5500	1355kg	229	5.3	-	170	223	29.7	+ As above, but with more power - As above	★★★★★
Porsche Boxster Spyder (987)	188 R	10-12	6/3436	316/7200	273/4750	1275kg	252	5.0	-	166	221	29.1	+ Lighter, more driver-centric Boxster - Collapsed-brolly roof not the most practical	★★★★★
Porsche Boxster (986 2.7)	049 R	99-04	6/2687	228/6300	192/4700	1275kg	182	6.3	-	155	-	29.1	+ Still an impeccable sports car - Very little	★★★★★
Porsche Boxster S (986)	070 R	99-04	6/3179	256/6200	229/4600	1320kg	200	5.5	-	164	-	26.9	+ Added power is seductive - As above	★★★★★
Radical SR3 SL	174 R	£69,840	4/2000	300/6000	265/4000	775kg	393	3.4	-	161	-	-	+ Our 2011 Track Car of the Year, and it's road-legal - You'll need to wrap up warm	★★★★★
Radical SR8LM	138 R	09-12	8/2800	460/10,500	260/8000	680kg	687	3.2	-	168	-	-	+ Fastest car around the Nordschleife - Convincing people it's road legal	★★★★★
Renault Sport Spider	183 R	96-99	4/1998	148/6000	136/4500	930kg	157	6.5	-	131	-	-	+ Ranty, fabulous unassisted steering feel - Heavier than you'd hope	★★★★★
Rolls-Royce Dawn	222 D	£250,000	12/6592	563/5250	575/1500	2560kg	223	4.9	-	155	330	20.0	+ Effortless driving experience - Driver involvement not a priority	★★★★★
Toyota MR2	187 R	00-06	4/1794	138/6400	125/4400	975kg	141	7.2	21.2	130	-	38.2	+ Tight lines, taut dynamics - Minimal luggage space	★★★★★
TVR Tamora	070 R	01-07	6/3605	350/7200	290/5500	1050kg	338	4.5	-	160	-	-	+ Well-sorted soft-top TVR - Awkward styling	★★★★★
TVR Tuscan Convertible	091 R	05-07	6/3996	365/6800	315/6000	1100kg	337	3.8	8.1	195+	-	-	+ Spirit of the Griff reborn - Over 195mph? Really?	★★★★★
TVR Chimera S 0	007 R	93-03	8/4988	320/5500	320/3750	1060kg	307	4.6	-	167	-	26.4	+ Gorgeous noise, tarmac-rippling grunt - Details	★★★★★
TVR Griffith 4.3	068 R	92-93	8/4280	280/5500	305/4000	1060kg	268	4.8	11.2	148	-	-	+ The car that made TVR. Cult status - Mere details	★★★★★
TVR Griffith 500	009 R	93-01	8/4988	320/5500	320/3750	1060kg	307	4.8	11.2	167	-	22.1	+ Gruff diamond - A few rough edges	★★★★★
Vauxhall VX220	023 R	00-04	4/2198	145/5800	150/4000	875kg	168	5.6	-	136	-	34.4	+ Absurdly good Vauxhall - The badge?	★★★★★
Vauxhall VX220 Turbo	066 R	03-05	4/1998	197/5500	184/1950	930kg	215	4.7	-	151	-	-	+ Nothing comes close for the money - Marginal everyday usability	★★★★★
Vuhl 05	220 R	£59,995	4/2000	285/5600	310/3000	725kg	405	3.7	-	152	-	-	+ Impressive pace and quality - You can get a more thrills from a Caterham at half the price	★★★★★

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M999 AIF	£595	C13 BLU	£595	R21 DAI	£595
P29 AIH	£795	877 BME	£1400	15 DAH	£595
H111 AIH	£2100	W26 BMW	£895	R26 DAL	£595
P121 AIH	£595	BMW 695V	£695	M70 DAL	£695
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J555 AIL	£795	C10 BOB	£1500	E328 DAN	£695
R24 AIP	£595	T3 BOB	£1400	C1 DAP	£695
R600 AIP	£595	P24 BOB	£1200	T60 DAP	£595
Y6 AJR	£1400	P10 BOB	£595	B35 DAV	£1200
K50 AJR	£795	B21 BON	£1600	D50 DAV	£1400
S400 AJS	£595	P23 BOB	£695	P840 DAV	£595
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P21 ALB	£595	P3 BOB	£1300	W9 DCG	£595
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N86 ALN	£595	R26 BOY	£595	N6 DCW	£595
AL8 ALN	£595	BP 5278	£1400	S210 DD	£1700
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H111 ALX	£595	V8 BRY	£595	K3 DEC	£1300
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W5 AMF	£595	Y7 BSH	£595	207 DEL	£1900
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P21 AMS	£595	M44 BUD	£595	EDN 464B	£695
M511 AMN	£595	C8 BUB	£1200	P900 DEN	£795
P21 ANA	£595	R21 BUL	£595	R28 DER	£595
K666 ANA	£595	127 BUL	£1600	K9 DES	£1200
R23 AND	£595	853 BUR	£1200	57 ED	£4700
P31 AND	£795	666 BW	£4400	L66 DES	£795
P24 ANG	£1100	BXG 862	£895	S16 DES	£1500
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C19 JON	£1700	A16 LES	£1800	737 MFK	£795
R26 JON	£1600	P90 LES	£595	427 NVO	£495
P777 JON	£1500	F121 LES	£595	123 NXV	£595
R27 JOS	£595	LES 351X	£595	G4 M6W	£695
G18 JOY	£1200	M19 LEW	£595	420 MHO	£595
R28 JOY	£1200	P100 LEW	£595	270 NY	£3900
243 JOY	£2200	R23 LEX	£595	60 NYW	£795
M8 JPB	£795	L1W 607	£1300	156 OFT	£1200
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P28 JTW	£595	D10 LOG	£595	F4 OOL	£595
P23 JUC	£1500	R23 LOL	£595	ORW I37	£1200
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R28 JUL	£595	R21 LOR	£595	333 OVX	£595
06 JUN	£795	H10 LOT	£795	99 OVR	£595
P21 JUN	£595	P31 LOU	£1500	Y99 MR	£695
364 JUY	£795	M60 MMC	£595	P321 MJR	£595
555 JYX	£595	S08 MMU	£595	S333 MJW	£595
42 JY	£1300	R23 MOG	£695	L2 PAM	£1800
N1 KAB	£595	831 LS	£4400	C1 REF	£595
E9 KAB	£595	Y9 LTD	£595	P22 REF	£595
T6 KAD	£595	F12 LUC	£595	PAM 19Y	£1500
H2 KAP	£595	R24 LUC	£595	V25 PAM	£795
W10 KAR	£595	P55 LUK	£595	PAM 592V	£695
Y12 KAR	£595	N5 LUK	£595	PAM 851M	£695
K444 KAR	£695	500 LXB	£795	S6 PAN	£595
555 LEX	£595	R24 MLC	£595	R23 PAN	£595
555 LYF	£595	R24 MLC	£595	H6 PAN	£595
LYN 21M	£2700	P25 MLC	£1500	T14 PAR	£795
P25 MLC	£1500	N6 MLC	£595	R29 PAR	£595
P23 MUD	£595	P31 MUD	£595	P24 PAS	£595
D11 MUM	£595	P23 MUD	£595	W12 PAT	£595
G40 MUM	£795	P27 MAD	£595	A98 PAT	£1200
X40 MUM	£595	MAD 546	£2300	D98 PAT	£795
S99 MUM	£795	R700 MAD	£595	RHJ R95	£595
R700 MAD	£595	P31 LYN	£5300	P24 PAW	£595
R7 MAF	£795	X5 KBB	£595	R18 R95	£595
K3 MAG	£1500	K82 B5	£595	PBB 335	£1400
S19 MAG	£595	GN 4861	£1900	I02 PBP	£595
T666 MAG	£595	GNH 904	£695	R23 PBP	£595
V333 MAH	£595	179 GNM	£595	P82 P93	£495
R23 MAK	£595	K5 GNS	£595	1978 PC	£2800
7002 MY	£1500	G11 GOW	£695	R31 PCH	£595
R23 MAL	£1300	R123 ELY	£695	D11 MUM	£595
1851 MY	£795	T31 GRA	£695	G40 MUM	£795
W2 NAH	£795	R123 GRA	£595	X40 MUM	£595
G7 NAH	£595	Y8 GRE	£595	S99 MUM	£795
NAR 594	£595	S2 GRM	£795	H8 PDW	£595
R28 NAS	£595	GTF 559	£1400	PDX I91	£695
91 NAS	£3500	Y500 ITR	£595	800 PEA	£1300
P28 NAT	£595	729 GTV	£695	B9 PEG	£1100
6973 ND	£1400	975 GUB	£595	R31 PEG	£595
A13 NDA	£595	K7 GUS	£1100	476 RPK	£1100
J30 NDA	£595	G37 GUY	£1100	R28 RKR	£595
A42 NDY	£595	406 GW	£2800	P28 RKS	£695

RATINGS ★ Thrill-free zone ★★ Tepid ★★★ Interesting ★★★★ Seriously good ★★★★★ A truly great car



OUR CHOICE

Porsche 911 R. GT3 RS engine, manual gearbox, no wing and a lightweight build ethic. It sounded like the perfect 911 on paper, and in physical form it has proved to be just that – or very close to it – for many. Hence its win at eCoty 2016 against some particularly strong rivals. Pity about those premiums...



BEST OF THE REST

Lower down the 911 range, the 991.2 Carrera and Carrera S haven't been ruined by the addition of turbos. Elsewhere, Jaguar's F-type R Coupe (left) is a real hoot, and we'd take a Mercedes-AMG C63 S Coupe over BMW M4, while Lotus's Exige and Evora continue to offer sublime handling in all guises.

	ISSUE NO.	PRICE	ENGINE CYL/CC	BHP/RPM	LB FT/RPM	WEIGHT	BHP/TON	0-60MPH	0-100MPH	MAX MPH	CO2 G/KM	EC MPG	EVO RATING	
Alfa Romeo 4C	209 R	£51,500	4/1742	237/6000	258/2200	895kg	269	4.5	-	160	157	41.5	+ Carbonfibre tub, mini-supercar looks - Hot hatch engine, clunky gearbox	★★★★★
Alfa Romeo 8C Competizione	120 R	£7,009	8/4691	450/7000	354/4750	1585kg	288	4.1	-	181	-	-	+ Looks, exclusivity, noise, balance - They're all sold	★★★★★
Alpina B4 Biturbo	206 R	£50,950	6/2993	345/4000	516/1500	1585kg	221	4.6	-	173	139	53.3	+ Fifth-gear oversteer - Sounds like a diesel; fuel economy not as good as you might hope	★★★★★
Alpina B4 Biturbo	206 R	£58,950	6/2979	404/5500	442/3000	1615kg	254	4.2	-	188	177	37.2	+ More fluid than the M4; better traction, too - Not as precise as the M-car over the limit	★★★★★
Aston Martin V8 Vantage	169 D	£84,995	8/4735	420/7000	346/5750	1630kg	262	4.7	-	180	328	20.4	+ 2012 upgrades keep the V8 Vantage on song - Starting to feel a little dated, though	★★★★★
Aston Martin V8 Vantage N430	218 R	£89,995	8/4735	430/7300	361/5000	1610kg	271	4.5	-	189	321	20.5	+ Malleable, involving, can still hold its own - Never feels rampantly quick	★★★★★
Aston Martin V8 Vantage S	168 R	£94,995	8/4735	430/7300	361/5000	1610kg	271	4.5	-	189	299	21.9	+ Keener engine, V12 Vantage looks - Slightly sluggish auto only	★★★★★
Aston Martin Vantage GT8	229 R	£165,000	8/4735	440/7300	361/5000	1530kg	292	4.4	-	190	-	-	+ Enough drama to fill a Netflix mini-series - Just 150 being made	★★★★★
Aston Martin V12 Vantage S	224 D	£138,000	12/5935	565/6750	457/5750	1665kg	345	3.7	-	205	343	19.2	+ Amongst the best Astons ever made - Old-school automated 'box (so get the manual)	★★★★★
Aston Martin Vantage GT12	214 R	£250,000	12/5935	592/7000	461/5500	1565kg	384	3.5	-	185	-	-	+ The GT3-style Vantage we've been waiting for - Only 100 being made	★★★★★
Aston Martin V12 Vantage	146 R	£9,130	12/5935	510/6500	420/5750	1680kg	308	4.4	9.7	190	388	17.3	+ The car we hoped the V8 Vantage would be - Erm, a tad thirsty?	★★★★★
Aston Martin DB11	226 R	£154,900	12/5204	600/6500	516/1500	1770kg	344	3.9	-	200	333	19.8	+ An excellent GT - Suffers in outright handling terms as a result	★★★★★
Aston Martin DB9 GT	214 D	£140,000	12/5935	540/6750	457/5500	1785kg	307	4.5	-	183	333	19.8	+ More power; still has bags of character - Needs eight-speed auto 'box	★★★★★
Aston Martin DB9	178 R	£94,160	12/5935	510/6500	457/5500	1785kg	290	4.6	-	183	368	18.2	+ A great start to Gaydon-era Astons - Automatic gearbox could be quicker	★★★★★
Aston Martin DBS	142 R	£7,120	12/5935	510/6500	332/1600	1695kg	306	4.2	-	191	388	17.3	+ Stupendous engine, gearbox, brakes - Pricey. Can bite the unwary	★★★★★
Audi TT 2.0 TFSI (Mk3)	204 R	£29,915	4/1984	227/4500	273/1650	1230kg	188	6.0	-	155	137	47.9	+ Desirable, grippy and effortlessly quick - Still not the last word in interaction	★★★★★
Audi TT 2.0 TFSI quattro (Mk3)	203 D	£32,860	4/1984	227/4500	273/1600	1335kg	173	5.3	-	155	149	44.1	+ Looks, interior, decent performance and handling - Lacks ultimate involvement	★★★★★
Audi TTS (Mk3)	209 R	£38,790	4/1984	306/5800	280/1800	1365kg	228	4.9	-	155	168	38.7	+ Dynamically interesting (for a TT) - Still not as interactive as a Cayman	★★★★★
Audi TT RS (Mk3)	228 R	£51,800	4/2480	394/5850	354/1700	1440kg	272	3.7	-	155	187	34.4	+ Tremendous point-to-point pace - Frustratingly one-dimensional in the bends	★★★★★
Audi TT RS (Mk2)	158 R	£9,194	5/2480	335/5400	332/1600	1450kg	235	4.4	11.1	155	209	31.4	+ Sublime 5-cylinder turbo engine - Rest of package can't quite match it	★★★★★
Audi TT RS Plus (Mk2)	185 D	£12,740	5/2480	355/5500	343/1650	1450kg	249	4.3	-	174	209	31.4	+ Stonkingly fast cross-country - Shockingly expensive for a TT	★★★★★
Audi S5	225 D	£43,795	6/2995	349/5400	369/1300	1505kg	220	4.7	-	155	166	38.7	+ Sweeter chassis than previous S5 - Still not engaging enough	★★★★★
Audi RS5	206 R	£59,870	8/4163	444/8250	317/4000	175kg	263	4.5	-	155	246	26.9	+ Brilliant engine and improved chassis - Lack of suspension travel; inconsistent steering	★★★★★
Audi R8 V8	201 R	£8,4163	4/247900	3174/500	1560kg	276	4.1	9.9	188	332	19.9	-	+ A true 911 alternative - Exclusivity comes at a price	★★★★★
Bentley Continental GT V8	178 R	£140,300	8/3993	500/6000	487/1700	2220kg	229	4.6	-	188	246	27.0	+ A proper drivers' Bentley with decent economy - W12 suddenly seems pointless	★★★★★
Bentley Continental GT V8 S	204 F	£149,800	8/3933	521/6000	502/1700	2220kg	238	4.3	-	192	250	26.4	+ An even better drivers' Bentley - Vast weight makes its presence felt in harder driving	★★★★★
Bentley Continental GT	152 D	£150,500	12/5998	567/6000	516/1700	2245kg	257	4.3	-	197	338	19.5	+ 200mph in utter comfort - Weight, thirst	★★★★★
Bentley Continental GT Speed	212 D	£168,300	12/5998	626/6000	605/1700	2245kg	283	4.0	-	206	338	19.5	+ Desirable meets exclusivity and performance - We'd still have the V8	★★★★★
Bentley Continental GT3-R	203 D	£237,500	8/3993	572/6000	518/1700	2120kg	274	3.6	-	170	295	22.2	+ The best-handling Continental ever - Expensive; it still weighs 2120kg	★★★★★
BMW 1-series M Coupe	188 R	£11,120	6/2979	335/5900	369/1500	1495kg	228	4.8	-	155	224	-	+ Character, turbo pace and great looks - Came and went too quick	★★★★★
BMW M240i Coupe	229 D	£35,090	6/2998	335/6800	369/1520	1470kg	232	4.8	-	155	179	36.2	+ Adjustable and plenty of fun - Lacks finesse and precision	★★★★★
BMW M235i Coupe	225 R	£14,716	6/2979	321/5800	332/1300	1455kg	224	5.2	12.7	155	189	34.9	+ Powertrain, chassis, looks, size - Limited-slip diff is an option, not standard	★★★★★
BMW M2	229 R	£44,070	6/2979	365/6500	369/1450	1495kg	248	4.5	-	155	199	33.2	+ More progressive chassis balance than M4 - Engine isn't inspirational	★★★★★
BMW M4	218 R	£57,055	6/2979	425/5500	406/1850	1515kg	285	4.3	-	155	204	32.1	+ Ferociously fast - A handful on less-than-perfect or less-than-bone-dry roads	★★★★★
BMW M4 Competition Package	226 R	£60,065	6/2979	444/7000	406/1850	1515kg	298	4.3	-	155	204	32.1	+ Better tied-down than the regular M4 - Torque delivery still rather abrupt	★★★★★
BMW M4 GTS	229 R	£120,500	6/2979	493/6250	442/4000	1510kg	332	3.7	8.0	190	199	34.0	+ Vast improvement on lesser M4s - So it should be at this price	★★★★★
BMW M3 (E92)	196 R	£7,130	8/3999	414/8300	295/3900	1580kg	266	4.3	10.3	155	290	22.8	+ Fends off all of its rivals - ...except the cheaper 1-series M	★★★★★
BMW M3 GTS (E92)	171 R	£10,710	8/4361	444/8300	324/3750	1530kg	295	4.3	-	190	295	-	+ Highly exclusive, one of the most focused M-cars ever - Good luck trying to find one	★★★★★
BMW M3 (E46)	066 R	£10,007	6/3246	338/7900	269/5000	1495kg	230	5.1	12.3	155	-	-	+ One of the best BMWs ever. Runner-up in eCoty 2001 - Slightly artificial steering feel	★★★★★
BMW M3 CS (E46)	219 R	£10,007	6/3246	338/7900	269/5000	1495kg	230	5.1	-	155	-	-	+ CSL dynamics without CSL price - Looks like the standard car	★★★★★
BMW M3 CSL (E46)	200 R	£10,007	6/3246	355/7900	273/4900	1385kg	260	5.3	12.0	155	-	-	+ Still superb - Changes from the automated single-clutch 'box are... a bit... sluggish	★★★★★
BMW M3 Evolution (E36)	148 R	£96,980	6/3201	321/7400	258/3250	1515kg	215	5.4	12.8	158	-	25.7	+ Performance, image - Never quite as good as the E30	★★★★★
BMW M3 (E30)	165 R	£86,900	4/2302	212/6750	170/4600	1165kg	185	6.7	17.8	147	-	20.3	+ Best M-car ever! Race-car dynamics for the road - Prices have got out of hand	★★★★★
BMW Z4 M Coupe	097 R	£60,019	6/3246	338/7900	269/4900	1420kg	242	5.0	-	155	-	23.3	+ A real drivers' car - You've got to be prepared to get stuck in	★★★★★
BMW M6 (F13)	218 R	£93,150	8/4395	552/6000	501/1500	1850kg	303	4.2	-	155	231	28.5	+ Mighty ability, pace, technology - You'll want the Competition Package upgrade too...	★★★★★
BMW M6 (E63)	106 R	£55,710	10/4999	500/7750	384/6100	1635kg	311	4.8	10.0	155	342	19.8	+ Awesome GT, awesome sports car - SMG gearbox now off the pace	★★★★★
BMW i8	210 R	£99,590	3/1499	357/5800	420/3700	1485kg	244	4.4	-	155	49	134.5	+ Brilliantly executed concept; sci-fi looks - Safe dynamic set-up	★★★★★
Chevrolet Camaro Z/28 *	220 R	£71,750	8/7008	505/6100	481/4800	1732kg	296	4.2	-	175	-	-	+ Scalpel-sharp engine, great chassis (really) - Feels very stiff on UK roads	★★★★★
Chevrolet Corvette Stingray (C7)	197 R	£62,470	8/6162	460/6000	465/4600	1496kg	312	4.4	9.4	180	279	23.5	+ Performance, chassis balance, supple ride - Body control could be better	★★★★★
Chevrolet Corvette Z06 (C7)	227 R	£89,620	8/6162	650/6000	650/3600	1598kg	413	3.7	-	196	291	23.1	+ Mind-boggling raw speed; surprisingly sophisticated - Edgy when really pushed	★★★★★
Ford Mustang 2.3 EcoBoost	222 D	£30,995	4/2261	313/5500	319/3000	1655kg	192	5.8	-	155	179	35.3	+ Ninety per cent as good as the V8 - Missing ten per cent is what makes the Mustang	★★★★★
Ford Mustang 5.0 V8 GT	225 R	£34,995	8/4951	410/6500	391/4250	1711kg	243	4.8	11.6	155	299	20.9	+ Looks, noise, performance, value, right-hand drive - Comes undone on rougher roads	★★★★★
Ginetta G40R	165 R	£35,940	4/1999	175/6700	140/5000	795kg	224	5.8	-	140	-	-	+ A race-compliant sports car for the road - Feels too soft to be a hardcore track toy	★★★★★
Honda Integra Type R (DC2)	200 R	£96,000	4/1797	187/8000	131/7300	1101kg	173	6.2	17.9	145	-	28.9	+ Arguably the greatest front-drive car ever - Too raw for some	★★★★★
Honda NSX (NA2)	188 R	£97,005	6/3179	276/7300	224/5300	1410kg	196	5.5	-	168	-	22.8	+ The useable supercar - 276bhp sounds a bit weird today	★★★★★
Honda NSX-R (NA2) *	100 R	£102,003	6/3179	276/7300	224/5300	1270kg	221	4.4	-	168	-	-	+ Evo Car of the Year 2002 - Hard to find in the UK	★★★★★
Infiniti Q60S	228 D	£42,990	6/2997	400/6400	350/1600	1799kg	226	5.0	-	155	208	31.0	+ Impressive tech - Electronic systems reduce feeling of involvement	★★★★★
Jaguar F-type Coupe	204 D	£51,260	6/2995	335/6500	332/3500	1567kg	217	5.5	-	161	234	28.8	+ Drop-dead looks, brilliant chassis, desirability - Engine lacks top-end fight	★★★★★
Jaguar F-type S Coupe	211 D	£60,260	6/2995	375/6500	339/3500	1584kg	241	5.3	-	171	234	28.8	+ Exquisite style, more rewarding (and affordable) than roadster - Scrappy on the limit	★★★★★
Jaguar F-type R Coupe	218 R	£85,010	8/5000	542/6500	501/3500	1650kg	334	4.0	-	186	255	26.4	+ Looks, presence, performance, soundtrack - Bumpy and boistrous	★★★★★
Jaguar F-type R Coupe AWD	227 D	£91,660	8/5000	542/6500	501/3500	1730kg	318	3.5	8.1	186	269	25.0	+ Better than the rear-drive R in the wet - Less involving in the dry	★★★★★
Jaguar F-type SVR Coupe	224 D	£110,000	8/5000	567/6500	516/3500	1705kg	338	3.5	-	200	269	25.0	+ A marginally better drive than the AWD R - Not by enough to justify the extra outlay	★★★★★
Jaguar XKR	168 R	£99,194	8/5000	503/6000	461/2500	1678kg	305	4.6	-	155	292	23.0	+ Fast and incredibly rewarding Jag - The kids will have to stay at home	★★★★★
Jaguar XKR-S	168 R	£11,714	8/5000	542/6000	502/2500	1678kg	328	4.2	-	186	292	23.0	+ Faster and wilder than regular XKR - The F-type R Coupe	★★★★★
Lexus RC200T F Sport	225 R	£36,495	4/1998	242/5800	258/1650	1675kg	147	7.5	-	143	168	39.2	+ Fluid ride - Lacks body control and outright grip	★★★★★
Lexus RC F	226 R	£59,995	8/4969	410/6400	391/4800	1765kg	271	4.5	-	168	251	26.5	+ Great steering, noise, sense of occasion - Too heavy to be truly exciting	★★★★★
Lotus Elise S Cup	207 D	£15	4/1798	217/6800	184/4600	932kg</								

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RATINGS ★ Thrill-free zone ★★ Tepid ★★★ Interesting ★★★★ Seriously good ★★★★★ A truly great car

	ISSUE NO.	PRICE	ENGINE CYL/CC	BHP/RPM	LB FT/RPM	WEIGHT	BHP/TON	0-60MPH	0-100MPH	MAX MPH	CO2 g/km	EC MPGS	EVO RATING	
Lotus Evija Sport 350	221 R	\$55,900	6/3456	345/7000	295/4500	1125kg	312	3.7	-	170	235	28.0	+ Further honed, and with a vastly improved gearshift - Still not easy to get into and out of	★★★★★
Lotus Evija S (V6)	209 R	12-15	6/3456	345/7000	295/4500	1176kg	298	3.8	-	170	235	28.0	+ Breathtaking road-racer; our joint 2012 Car of the Year - Gearshift not the sweetest	★★★★★
Lotus Evija S (S2)	105 R	06-11	4/1796	218/7800	158/5500	930kg	238	4.5	-	148	199	33.2	+ Lightweight with a hefty punch - Uninspiring soundtrack	★★★★★
Lotus Evija (S1)	200 R	00-01	4/1796	192/7800	146/5000	780kg	247	4.6	-	136	-	-	+ Looks and goes like Elise racer - A tad lacking in refinement	★★★★★
Lotus Evora	138 R	\$52,500	6/3456	276/6400	258/4700	1382kg	203	5.6	13.6	162	217	30.3	+ Sublime ride and handling. Our 2009 car of the year - Pricey options	★★★★★
Lotus Evora S	168 R	\$63,950	6/3456	345/7000	295/4500	1430kg	245	4.6	-	172	229	28.7	+ A faster and better Evora - But one which spars with the Porsche 911...	★★★★★
Lotus Evora 400	216 R	\$72,000	6/3456	400/7000	302/3500	1395kg	291	4.1	-	186	225	29.1	+ Evora excitement levels take a leap - Gearbox still not perfect; punchy pricing	★★★★★
Maserati GranTurismo	114 R	\$82,890	8/4244	399/7100	339/4750	1880kg	216	5.5	12.7	177	330	19.8	+ Striking, accomplished GT - Doesn't spike the pulse like an Aston or 911	★★★★★
Maserati GranTurismo Sport	188 R	\$91,420	8/4691	454/7000	383/4750	1880kg	245	4.8	-	185	331	19.7	+ The best everyday GranTurismo yet - Starting to get long in the tooth	★★★★★
Maserati GranTurismo MC Stradale	193 R	\$110,740	8/4691	454/7000	383/4750	1800kg	256	4.5	-	188	360	18.2	+ Brilliant blend of road racer and GT - Gearbox takes a little getting used to	★★★★★
Mazda RX-8	122 R	03-11	2R/1308	228/8200	156/5500	1429kg	162	6.5	16.4	146	299	24.6	+ Never mind the quirks, it's a great drive - Wafer-thin torque output	★★★★★
Mercedes-AMG C43 4Matic Coupe	225 D	\$66,280	8/2996	362/5500	383/2000	1735kg	292	4.7	-	155	178	36.2	+ Fast and instilled with a real sense of quality - Not enough emphasis on fun	★★★★★
Mercedes-AMG C63 S Coupe	229 R	\$49,205	8/3982	503/5500	516/1750	1725kg	296	3.9	-	155	200	24.8	+ Mouth-watering mechanical package; better than an M4 - Light steering	★★★★★
Mercedes-Benz C63 AMG Coupe	162 R	11-14	8/6208	451/6800	442/5000	1655kg	277	4.4	10.3	186	280	23.5	+ A proper two-door M3 rival - C63 saloon looks better	★★★★★
Mercedes-Benz C63 AMG Black Series	171 R	12-13	8/6208	510/6800	457/5200	1635kg	317	4.2	-	186	286	-	+ The C63 turned up to 11 - Too heavy, not as fiery as Black Series cars of old	★★★★★
Mercedes-Benz CLK63 AMG Black Series	106 R	07-09	8/6208	500/6800	464/5250	1760kg	289	4.2	-	186	-	-	+ AMG goes Porsche-hunting - Dull-witted gearshift spoils the party	★★★★★
Mercedes-AMG S63 Coupe	205 D	\$125,595	8/5461	577/5500	664/2250	1995kg	294	4.2	-	155	237	28.0	+ Thunderously fast S-class built for drivers - Lacks badge appeal of a Continental GT	★★★★★
Mercedes-AMG S65 Coupe	209 D	\$183,075	12/5980	621/4800	737/2300	2101kg	299	4.1	-	186	279	23.7	+ Almighty power, fabulous luxury - Nearly £60k more than the S63!	★★★★★
Mercedes-AMG GT	227 D	\$98,195	8/3982	456/6000	442/1600	1540kg	301	4.0	-	189	216	30.4	+ A true sports car that also does luxury - Takes time to reveal its talents	★★★★★
Mercedes-AMG GT S	216 R	\$110,495	8/3982	503/6250	479/1750	1570kg	326	3.8	-	193	219	30.1	+ Fantastic chassis, huge grip - Artificial steering feel; downshifts could be quicker	★★★★★
Nissan 370Z	204 R	\$27,445	6/3696	323/7000	268/5200	1496kg	219	5.3	-	155	248	26.7	+ Quicker, leaner, keener than 350Z - Not quite a Cayman-killer	★★★★★
Nissan 370Z Nismo	209 R	\$37,585	6/3696	339/7400	274/5200	1496kg	230	5.2	-	155	248	26.6	+ Sharper looks, improved ride, extra thrills - Engine lacks sparkle	★★★★★
Nissan GT-R (2017MY)	224 D	\$79,995	6/3799	562/6800	470/3600	1752kg	326	2.7	-	196	275	24.0	+ More refinement, much improved interior, still fast - Feels a touch less alert	★★★★★
Nissan GT-R Track Edition (2017MY)	229 D	\$91,995	6/3799	562/6800	470/3600	1745kg	327	2.7	-	196	275	24.0	+ GT-R regains its sharpness - Getting pricey these days	★★★★★
Nissan GT-R Nismo	205 R	\$125,000	6/3799	592/6800	481/3200	1720kg	350	2.6	-	196	275	24.0	+ Manages to make regular GT-R feel imprecise - Compromised by super-firm suspension	★★★★★
Nissan GT-R (2012MY-2016MY)	218 R	12-16	6/3799	542/6400	466/3200	1740kg	316	3.2	7.5	196	275	24.0	+ GT-R is quicker and better than ever - But costs over £20k more than its launch price	★★★★★
Nissan GT-R Track Edition (2016MY)	223 R	15-16	6/3799	542/6400	466/3200	1740kg	316	3.4	7.7	196	275	24.0	+ Recreates much of the Nismo's ability, without the rock-hard ride - Interior feels dated	★★★★★
Nissan Skyline GT-R (R34)	196 R	99-02	6/2568	276/7000	289/4400	1560kg	180	4.7	12.5	165	-	-	+ Big, brutal, and great fun - Needs more than the standard 276bhp	★★★★★
Nissan Skyline GT-R (R33)	196 R	97-99	6/2568	276/6800	271/4400	1540kg	182	5.4	14.3	155	-	-	+ Proof that Japanese hi-tech can work (superbly) - Limited supply	★★★★★
Peugeot RCZ 1.6 THP 200	155 R	\$27,150	4/1598	197/5500	202/1700	1421kg	141	7.3	18.1	147	155	42.1	+ Distinctive looks, highly capable handling - Could be a bit more exciting	★★★★★
Peugeot RCZ R	209 R	\$32,250	4/1598	266/6000	243/1900	1280kg	211	5.9	-	155	145	44.8	+ Rewarding and highly effective when fully lit - Dated cabin, steering lacks feel	★★★★★
Porsche 718 Cayman	229 D	\$39,878	4/1988	296/6500	280/1950	1335kg	225	5.1	-	170	168	47.1	+ Chassis remains a dream - Engine feels strangled and sounds horribly harsh	★★★★★
Porsche 718 Cayman S	225 D	\$48,843	4/2497	345/6500	310/1900	1355kg	259	4.6	-	177	184	26.4	+ Faster and better to drive than ever - Turbo four-cylinder robs it of some of its charm	★★★★★
Porsche Cayman S (981)	202 R	16-16	6/3436	321/7400	273/4500	1320kg	247	4.5	10.5	175	206	32.1	+ The Cayman comes of age - Erm...	★★★★★
Porsche Cayman GT3 (981)	219 F	14-16	6/3436	335/7400	280/4750	1345kg	253	4.9	-	177	211	31.4	+ Tweaks improve an already sublime package - Slightly 'aftermarket' looks	★★★★★
Porsche Cayman GT4 (981)	221 R	15-16	6/3800	380/7400	310/4750	1340kg	288	4.4	-	183	238	27.4	+evo Car of the Year 2015 (even though the 991 GT3 RS was there!) - Second-hand prices	★★★★★
Porsche Cayman S (987)	132 R	06-13	6/3436	316/7200	273/4750	1350kg	237	5.2	-	172	223	29.7	+ Still want that 911? - Yeah, us too	★★★★★
Porsche Cayman R (987)	158 R	11-13	6/3436	325/7400	273/4750	1295kg	255	4.7	-	175	228	29.1	+ Total handling excellence - Styling additions not to all tastes	★★★★★
Porsche 911 Carrera (991.2)	218 R	\$76,412	6/2981	365/6500	332/1700	1430kg	259	4.6	-	183	190	34.0	+ Forced induction hasn't ruined the Carrera - Purists won't be happy	★★★★★
Porsche 911 Carrera S (991.2)	217 R	\$85,857	6/2981	414/6500	369/1700	1440kg	292	4.3	-	191	199	32.5	+ As above, but blindingly fast - You'll want the sports exhaust	★★★★★
Porsche 911 Carrera S (991.1)	201 R	12-15	6/3800	394/7400	324/5600	1415kg	283	4.3	9.5	188	223	29.7	+ A Carrera with supercar pace - Electric steering robs it of some tactility	★★★★★
Porsche 911 Carrera 4S (991.1)	179 R	13-15	6/3800	394/7400	324/5600	1465kg	273	4.5	-	185	233	28.5	+ More satisfying than rear-drive 991.1 Carreras - Choose your spec carefully	★★★★★
Porsche 911 Carrera 4 GTS (991.1)	208 D	15	6/3800	424/7500	324/5750	1470kg	293	4.4	-	189	233	28.5	+ The highlight of the 991.1 Carrera line-up - Pricey for a Carrera	★★★★★
Porsche 911 Carrera S (997.2)	121 R	08-11	6/3800	380/6500	310/4400	1425kg	271	4.7	-	188	242	27.4	+ Poise, precision, blinding pace - Feels a bit clinical	★★★★★
Porsche 911 Carrera S (997.1)	070 R	04-08	6/3824	350/6600	295/4600	1420kg	246	4.6	10.9	182	-	-	+evo Car of the Year 2004; like a junior GT3 - Tech overload?	★★★★★
Porsche 911 GT3 (991)	206 R	\$100,540	6/3799	468/8250	324/6250	1430kg	333	3.5	-	196	289	23.0	+evo Car of the Year 2013 - At its best at licence-troubling speeds	★★★★★
Porsche 911 GT3 RS (991)	223 R	\$131,296	6/3996	493/8250	339/6250	1420kg	353	3.0	7.1	193	296	22.2	+ Sensationally good to drive - They won't all be painted Ultra Violet	★★★★★
Porsche 911 R (991)	229 R	\$136,901	6/3996	493/8250	339/6250	1370kg	366	3.8	-	200	308	21.2	+evo Car of the Year 2016 - Limited availability	★★★★★
Porsche 911 GT3 (997.2)	182 R	09-11	6/3797	429/7600	317/6250	1395kg	312	4.2	9.2	194	303	22.1	+ Even better than the car it replaced - Give us a minute...	★★★★★
Porsche 911 GT3 RS (3.8, 997.2)	200 R	10-11	6/3797	444/7900	317/6750	1370kg	329	4.0	-	193	314	-	+ Our favourite car from the first 200 issues of evo - For people like us, nothing	★★★★★
Porsche 911 GT3 RS 4.0 (997.2)	187 R	11-12	6/3996	493/8250	339/5750	1360kg	368	3.8	-	193	326	-	+evo Car of the Year 2011 - Unforgiving on-road ride; crazy used prices	★★★★★
Porsche 911 GT3 (997.1)	182 R	07-09	6/3600	409/7600	298/5500	1395kg	298	4.3	9.4	192	-	-	+ Runner-up evo Car of the Year 2006 - Ferrari 599 GTBs	★★★★★
Porsche 911 GT3 RS (997.1)	105 R	07-09	6/3600	409/7600	298/5500	1375kg	302	4.2	-	193	-	-	+evo Car of the Year 2007 - A chunk more money than the brilliant GT3	★★★★★
Porsche 911 GT3 (996.2)	221 R	03-05	6/3600	375/7400	284/5000	1380kg	272	4.3	9.2	190	-	-	+evo Car of the Year 2003 - Chassis is a bit too track-focused for some roads	★★★★★
Porsche 911 GT3 RS (996.2)	068 R	03-05	6/3600	375/7400	284/5000	1330kg	286	4.2	9.2	190	-	-	+ Track-biased version of above - Limited supply	★★★★★
Porsche 911 GT3 (996.1)	182 R	99	6/3600	360/7200	273/5000	1350kg	271	4.5	10.3	187	-	21.9	+evo Car of the Year 1999 - Porsche didn't build enough	★★★★★
Radical RXC	189 R	\$94,500	6/3700	350/6750	320/4250	900kg	395	2.8	-	175	-	-	+ A real trackday weapon - Can't match the insanity of a Caterham 620R	★★★★★
Radical RXC Turbo	205 R	\$129,000	6/3496	454/6000	500/3600	940kg	491	2.6	-	185	-	-	+ Eats GT3s for breakfast - Might not feel special enough at this price	★★★★★
Radical RXC Turbo 500	209 D	\$143,400	6/3496	530/6100	481/5000	1100kg	491	2.6	6.8	185	-	-	+ Huge performance, intuitive adjustability, track ability - Compromised for road use	★★★★★
Radical RXC Turbo 500R	227 D	\$201,000	6/3496	600/6700	465/4200	1070kg	561	2.8	-	185	-	-	+ Immense accessible performance - Fit, finish and detailing lacks finesse at this price	★★★★★
Rolls-Royce Wraith	205 D	\$229,128	12/6592	624/5600	590/1500	2360kg	260	4.6	-	155	327	20.2	+ Refinement, chassis, drivetrain - Shared componentry lets cabin down	★★★★★
Subaru BRZ	204 R	\$22,495	4/1998	197/7000	151/6400	1230kg	163	7.6	-	140	181	36.2	+ Fine chassis, great steering - Weak engine, not the slide-happy car they promised	★★★★★
Toyota GT86	223 R	\$22,495	4/1998	197/7000	151/6400	1240kg	161	6.9	16.5	140	181	36.2	+ More fun than its cousin (above) - Same lack of torque, poor interior quality	★★★★★
TVR Sagaris	097 R	05-07	6/3996	406/7500	349/5000	1078kg	383	3.7	-	185	-	-	+ Looks outrageous - 406bhp feels a touch optimistic	★★★★★
VW Scirocco GT 2.0 TSI	155 R	\$26,125	4/1984	217/4500	258/1500	1369kg	158	6.5	-	153	139	47.1	+ Golf GTI price and performance - Interior lacks flair	★★★★★
VW Scirocco R	200 D	\$32,580	4/1984	276/6000	258/2500	1426kg	187	5.7	-	155	187	35.3	+ Great engine, grown-up dynamics - Perhaps a little too grown-up for some	★★★★★

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OUR CHOICE

McLaren 675LT. The 'long-tail' is the step forward we've been hoping for from McLaren's super-series cars, adding a real sense of involvement to the incredible pace that's been building since the 12C. In fact, the 675LT is so intense it might even make you question if you need a P1.



BEST OF THE REST

The Ferrari 488 GTB (left) has a stunning turbocharged engine and the chassis to exploit it. Lamborghini's Aventador offers true supercar drama, especially in Supervocele form, while the Pagani Huayra rivals it for theatre (albeit at four times the price) and was our joint 2012 Car of the Year.

	ISSUE NO.	PRICE	ENGINE CYL/CC	BHP/RPM	LB FT/RPM	WEIGHT	BHP/TON	0-60MPH	0-100MPH	MAX MPH	CO2 G/KM	EC MPG	EVO RATING
Aston Martin Vanquish (Mk2)	203 R	£192,995	12/5935	568/6650	465/5500	1739kg	332	3.6	-	201	298	22.1	+ Much better than the DBS it succeeds, especially in 2015MY form - It's no Ferrari F12 ★★★★★
Aston Martin Vanquish S (Mk1)	110 R	'05-'07	12/5935	520/7000	425/5800	1875kg	282	4.9	10.1	200	-	-	+ Vanquish joins supercar greats - A tad intimidating at the limit ★★★★★
Aston Martin One-77	179 R	'10-'12	12/7312	750/6000	553/7600	1740kg	438	3.7	-	220+	-	-	+ The engine, the looks, the drama - Gearbox hates manoeuvring; only 77 were made ★★★★★
Audi R8 V10	228 D	£119,520	10/5204	533/8250	398/6500	1595kg	340	3.5	-	198	272	24.8	+ All the R8 you really need - Some may hanker after a manual gearbox ★★★★★
Audi R8 V10 Plus	229 R	£134,520	10/5204	602/8250	413/6500	1555kg	393	3.2	-	205	287	23.0	+ Timeless drivetrain, huge performance - Needs to be driven hard to really engage ★★★★★
Audi R8 V10	181 D	'10-'15	10/5204	518/8000	391/6500	1620kg	325	3.9	8.4	194	346	19.0	+ Real supercar feel - The V8 is cheaper, and still superb ★★★★★
Audi R8 V10 Plus	190 R	'13-'15	10/5204	542/8000	398/6500	1570kg	351	3.8	-	198	346	19.0	+ An R8 fit to take on the 458 and 12C - Firm ride may be too much for some ★★★★★
Audi R8 GT	169 F	'10-'12	10/5204	552/8000	398/6500	1520kg	369	3.6	-	199	-	-	+ Everything we love about the R8 - Not as hardcore as we wanted ★★★★★
Audi R8 LMX	208 R	'15	10/5204	562/8000	398/6500	1595kg	358	3.4	-	198	299	21.9	+ More of everything that makes the R8 great - S-tronic transmission not perfect ★★★★★
Bugatti Veyron 16.4	134 R	'05-'11	16/7993	1000/6000	922/2200	1950kg	521	2.8	5.8	253	596	11.4	+ Superbly engineered 4WD quad-turbo racer - Er, lacks luggage space? ★★★★★
Bugatti Veyron Super Sport	151 R	'10-'14	16/7993	1183/6400	1106/3000	1838kg	654	2.5	-	268	539	12.2	+ The world's fastest supercar - Limited to 258mph for us mere mortals ★★★★★
Bugatti EB110	078 R	'91-'95	12/3500	552/8000	451/3750	1566kg	358	3.4	-	212	-	-	+ Superbly engineered 4WD quad-turbo rocket - It just fizzled out ★★★★★
Chevrolet Corvete ZR1	133 R	'09-'13	8/6162	638/6500	603/3800	1528kg	424	3.8	7.6	205	355	18.8	+ Huge pace and character - Take plenty of brave pills if there's rain ★★★★★
Ferrari 488 GTB	228 R	£183,964	8/3902	661/6500	561/3000	1475kg	455	3.0	-	205+	260	24.8	+ Staggeringly capable - Lacks a little of the 458's heart and excitement ★★★★★
Ferrari 488 Spider	216 D	£204,400	8/3902	661/6500	561/3000	1525kg	440	3.0	-	203+	260	24.8	+ As above, but with the wind in your hair - See left ★★★★★
Ferrari 458 Italia	221 R	'09-'15	8/4497	562/9000	398/6000	1485kg	384	3.2	6.8	202	307	20.6	+ An astounding achievement - Paddleshift only ★★★★★
Ferrari 458 Speciale	203 R	'14-'15	8/4497	597/9000	398/6000	1395kg	435	3.0	-	202+	275	23.9	+ evo Car of the Year 2014 - If you don't own a regular 458, nothing ★★★★★
Ferrari F430	163 R	'04-'10	8/4308	483/8500	343/5250	1449kg	339	4.0	-	196	-	-	+ Just brilliant - Didn't you read the plus point? ★★★★★
Ferrari 430 Scuderia	121 R	'07-'10	8/4308	503/8500	347/5250	1350kg	378	3.5	7.7	198	-	15.7	+ Successful F1 technology transplant - Likes to shout about it ★★★★★
Ferrari 360 Modena	163 R	'99-'04	8/3586	394/8500	275/4750	1390kg	288	4.5	9.0	183	-	-	+ Worthy successor to 355 - Not quite as involving as it should be ★★★★★
Ferrari 360 Challenge Stradale	068 R	'03-'04	8/3586	420/8500	275/4750	1280kg	333	4.1	-	186	-	-	+ Totally exhilarating road-racer. It's loud - It's very, very loud ★★★★★
Ferrari F12 Berlinetta	190 R	£241,053	12/6262	730/8250	509/6000	1630kg	455	3.1	-	211	350	18.8	+ 730bhp isn't too much power for the road - Super-quick steering is an acquired taste ★★★★★
Ferrari F12tdf	217 R	£339,000	12/6262	769/8500	520/6250	1520kg	514	2.9	-	211	360	18.3	+ Alarmingly fast - Doesn't flow like a 458 Speciale ★★★★★
Ferrari 599 GTB Fiorano	101 R	'06-'12	12/5999	611/7600	448/5600	1688kg	368	3.5	7.4	205	415	15.8	+ evo Car of the Year 2006 - Banks are getting harder to rob ★★★★★
Ferrari 599 GTB	161 R	'11-'12	12/5999	661/8250	445/6500	1605kg	418	3.4	-	208	-	-	+ One of the truly great Ferraris - Erm, the air con isn't very good ★★★★★
Ferrari 575M Fiorano Handling Pack	200 R	'02-'06	12/5748	508/7250	434/5250	1730kg	298	4.2	9.6	202	-	12.3	+ Fiorano pack makes 575 truly great - It should have been standard ★★★★★
Ferrari 550 Maranello	169 R	'97-'02	12/5474	485/7000	415/5000	1716kg	287	4.3	10.0	199	-	12.3	+ Everything - Nothing ★★★★★
Ferrari GTC4 Lusso	225 D	£230,430	12/6262	680/8000	514/5750	1920kg	360	3.4	-	208	350	18.8	+ Rear-wheel steering increases agility - Not as engaging as other Ferraris ★★★★★
Ferrari FF	194 R	'11-'15	12/6262	651/8000	504/6000	1880kg	347	3.7	-	208	360	15.4	+ Four seats and 4WD, but a proper Ferrari - Looks divide opinion ★★★★★
Ferrari LaFerrari	203 R	'13-'15	12/6262	950/9000	664/6750	1255kg	769	3.0	-	217+	330	-	+ Perhaps the greatest Ferrari ever - Brakes lack a touch of precision on track ★★★★★
Ferrari Enzo	203 R	'02-'04	12/5999	651/7800	485/5500	1365kg	485	3.5	6.7	217+	545	-	+ Intoxicating, exploitable - Cabin detailing falls short of a Zonda or F1's ★★★★★
Ferrari F50	186 R	'96-'97	12/4699	513/8500	347/6500	1230kg	424	3.9	-	202	-	-	+ A better drivers' Ferrari than the 288, F40 or Enzo - Not better looking, though ★★★★★
Ferrari F40	222 R	'87-'92	8/2936	471/7000	426/4000	1100kg	437	4.1	-	201	-	-	+ Brutally fast - It's in the dictionary under 'turbo lag' ★★★★★
Ford GT	200 R	'04-'06	8/5409	550/6500	500/3750	1583kg	353	3.7	-	205	-	-	+ Our 2005 Car of the Year - Don't scalp yourself getting in ★★★★★
Hennessey Venom GT	180 R	£900,000	8/7000	1244/6500	1155/4000	1244kg	1016	2.5	-	270	-	-	+ 0-200mph in 14.5sec, and it handles too - Looks like an Exige ★★★★★
Honda NSX	229 R	£132,75	6/3493	573	476/2000	1776kg	328	2.9	-	191	228	28.2	+ Like a baby Porsche 918 - Lacks typical Japanese character ★★★★★
Jaguar XJ220	157 R	'92-'94	6/3498	542/7200	475/4500	1470kg	375	3.7	-	213	-	-	+ Britain's greatest supercar... - until McLaren built the F1 ★★★★★
Koenigsegg Agera 1	180 R	£109m	8/5032	1124/7100	885/2700	1435kg	796	2.8	-	273	-	-	+ As fast and exciting as your body can handle - It's Veyron money ★★★★★
Koenigsegg One:1	202 R	£62.0m	8/5065	1341/7500	1011/6000	1360kg	1002	2.9	-	273	-	-	+ The most powerful car we've ever tested - It's sold out; we couldn't afford one anyway... ★★★★★
Koenigsegg CCRX Edition	118 R	'08-'10	8/4800	1004/7000	796/5600	1280kg	797	2.8	-	250+	-	-	+ One of the world's fastest cars - Spike power delivery ★★★★★
Lamborghini Huracán LP580-2	229 R	£155,400	10/5204	572/8000	391/6500	1389kg	418	3.4	-	199	278	23.7	+ More seductive than the 4WD Huracán - Feels like there's more to come ★★★★★
Lamborghini Huracán LP610-4	209 D	£186,760	10/5204	602/8250	413/6500	1532kg	399	3.2	-	202+	290	22.6	+ Defies the numbers; incredible point-to-point pace - Takes work to find its sweet-spot ★★★★★
Lamborghini Gallardo LP560-4	180 D	'08-'13	10/5204	552/8000	398/6500	1410kg	398	3.7	-	202	325	16.0	+ Still a missile from A to B - Starting to show its age ★★★★★
Lamborghini Gallardo	094 R	'06-'08	10/4961	513/8000	376/4250	1520kg	343	4.3	9.4	196	-	-	+ On a full-bore start it spins all four wheels. Cool - Slightly clunky e-gear ★★★★★
Lamborghini Aventador LP700-4	194 R	£260,040	12/6498	690/8250	509/5500	1575kg	445	2.9	-	217	370	17.7	+ Most important new Lambo since the Countach - Erm... expensive? ★★★★★
Lamborghini Aventador LP750-4 SV	216 R	£321,723	12/6498	740/8400	509/5500	1525kg	493	2.8	-	217+	370	17.7	+ More exciting than the standard Aventador - ISR gearbox inconsistent ★★★★★
Lamborghini Murciélago LP640	093 R	'06-'11	12/6496	631/8000	487/6000	1665kg	385	3.3	-	211	-	21.3	+ Compelling old-school supercar - You'd better be on your toes ★★★★★
Lamborghini Murciélago LP670-4 SV	200 R	'09-'11	12/6496	661/8000	487/6500	1565kg	429	3.2	7.3	212	-	-	+ A supercar in its truest, wildest sense - Be prepared for stares ★★★★★
Lamborghini Murciélago	089 D	'01-'06	12/6192	570/7500	479/5400	1650kg	359	4.0	-	205	-	-	+ Gorgeous, capable and incredibly friendly - V12 feels stressed ★★★★★
Lamborghini Diablo 6.0	019 R	'00-'02	12/5992	550/7100	457/5500	1625kg	343	3.8	-	200+	-	-	+ Best-built, best-looking Diablo of all - People's perceptions ★★★★★
Lexus LFA/LFA Nürburgring	200 R	'10-'12	10/4805	552/8700	354/6800	1480kg	379	3.7	-	202	-	-	+ Absurd and compelling supercar - Badge and price don't quite match ★★★★★
Maserati MC12	079 R	'04-'05	12/5998	621/7500	481/5500	1445kg	437	3.8	-	205	-	-	+ Rarer than an Enzo - The Ferrari's better ★★★★★
McLaren 540C	228 R	£126,000	8/3799	533/7500	398/3500	1311kg	413	3.5	-	199	258	25.5	+ A very good junior supercar - The 570S is still better to drive ★★★★★
McLaren 570S	229 R	£143,250	8/3799	562/7500	443/5000	1440kg	397	3.1	-	204	249	26.6	+ A truly fun and engaging sports car - McLaren doesn't call it a supercar(!) ★★★★★
McLaren 570GT	228 R	£154,000	8/3799	562/7500	443/5000	1495kg	382	3.4	-	204	249	26.6	+ Blurs the line between grand tourer and supercar brilliantly - 570S is more involving ★★★★★
McLaren 650S	196 R	£195,250	8/3799	641/7250	500/6000	1428kg	456	3.0	-	207	275	24.2	+ Better brakes, balance and looks than 12C; more power too - Costs an extra £19k ★★★★★
McLaren 675LT	228 R	£259,500	8/3799	666/7100	516/5500	1328kg	510	2.9	-	205	275	24.2	+ Runner-up at eCoty 2015; asks questions of the P1 - Aventador price tag ★★★★★
McLaren 675LT Spider	222 D	£285,450	8/3799	666/7100	516/5500	1368kg	495	2.9	-	203	275	24.2	+ Spectacularly fast; involving, too - Might mess up your hair ★★★★★
McLaren 12C	228 R	'11-'14	8/3799	616/7500	442/3000	1434kg	435	3.1	-	207	279	24.2	+ Staggering performance, refinement - Engine noise can be grating ★★★★★
McLaren P1	228 R	'13-'15	8/3799	903/7500	664/4000	1490kg	616	2.8	-	217	194	34.0	+ Freakish breadth of ability - At its mind-bending best on track ★★★★★
McLaren F1	228 R	'94-'98	12/6064	627/7500	479/4000	1137kg	560	3.2	6.3	240+	-	19.0	+ Still the most single-minded supercar ever - There'll never be another ★★★★★
Mercedes-Benz SLS AMG	159 R	'10-'15	8/6208	563/6800	479/4750	1620kg	335	4.1	8.4	197	308	21.4	+ Great engine and chassis (gullwing doors too!) - Slightly tardy gearbox ★★★★★
Mercedes-Benz SLS AMG Black Series	204 R	'13-'15	8/6208	622/7400	468/5500	1550kg	408	3.6	-	196	321	20.6	+ Stunning engine, superb body control - Be careful on less-than-smooth roads... ★★★★★
Mercedes-Benz SLR McLaren	228 R	'03-'07	8/5439	617/6500	550/3250	1693kg	370	3.7	-	208	-	-	+ Zonda-pace, 575-style drivability - Dreadful brake feel ★★★★★
Noble M600	186 R	£200,000	8/4439	650/6800	604/3800	1198kg	551	3.8	7.7	225	-	-	+ Spiritual successor to the Ferrari F40 - It's a bit pricey ★★★★★
Pagani Huayra	185 R	c£1m	12/5980	720/5800	737/2250	1350kg	542	3.3	-	224	-	-	+ Our joint 2012 Car of the Year - Engine isn't as nape-prickling as the Zonda's ★★★★★
Pagani Zonda 760RS	170 R	£1.5m	12/7291	750/6300	575/4500	1210kg	630	3.3	-	217+	-	-	+ One of the most extreme Zondas ever - One of the last Zondas ever (probably) ★★★★★
Pagani Zonda S T3	096 R	'02-'05	12/7291	555/5900	553/4050	1250kg	451	3.6	-	197	-	-	+ evo Car of the Year 2001 (in earlier 7.0 form) - Values have gone up a fair bit since then ★★★★★
Pagani Zonda F	186 R	'05-'06	12/7291	602/6150	575/4000	1230kg	497	3.6	-	214	-	-	+ Everything an Italian supercar ought to be - Looks a bit

TRACK TIMES

● = new this month. **Red** denotes the car is the fastest in its class on that track.

ANGLESEY COASTAL CIRCUIT

📍 **LOCATION** Anglesey, UK
 📍 **GPS** 53.188372, -4.496385
 📍 **LENGTH** 1.55 miles



Car	Lap time	issue no.	YouTube
● BAC Mono 2.5 (fastest sports car)	1:07.7	229	Yes
Radical RXC Turbo 500 (fastest coupe)	1:10.5	-	Yes
McLaren P1 (on Pirelli P Zero Trofeo R tyres) (fastest supercar)	1:11.2	200	Yes
Porsche 918 Spyder	1:12.4	200	Yes
McLaren P1	1:12.6	200	Yes
Ferrari 488 GTB	1:12.8	228	Yes
McLaren 675LT	1:12.8	228	Yes
Porsche 911 GT3 RS (991.1)	1:13.6	-	Yes
Porsche 911 Turbo S (991)	1:13.6	-	Yes
Ferrari 458 Speciale	1:14.2	198	Yes
Porsche 911 Turbo (991.1)	1:15.2	210	Yes
Aston Martin Vantage GT12	1:16.0	214	Yes
Nissan GT-R (2014MY)	1:16.9	210	Yes
Mercedes-AMG GT S	1:17.0	210	Yes
Porsche 911 Carrera (991.1)	1:17.8	199	Yes
Porsche Cayman (981)	1:18.9	209	-
Aston Martin N430	1:19.1	210	-
Lotus Exige S (V6)	1:19.1	209	-
SEAT Leon Cupra 280 Sub8 (fastest hot hatch)	1:19.1	212	Yes
BMW M4	1:19.2	199	Yes
BMW i8	1:19.4	210	-
Honda Civic Type R (FK2)	1:19.5	212	-
Renaultsport Mégane Trophy 275	1:19.6	212	-
BMW M5 Competition Pack (F10M) (fastest saloon)	1:19.7	-	Yes
Audi TTS (Mk3)	1:19.9	209	-
Audi R8 V8 (Mk1)	1:20.1	201	-
BMW M135i	1:20.4	212	-
Nissan 370Z Nismo	1:20.5	209	-
Alfa Romeo 4C	1:20.7	209	-
VW Golf R (Mk7)	1:21.6	212	-

BEDFORD AUTODROME WEST CIRCUIT

📍 **LOCATION** Bedfordshire, UK
 📍 **GPS** 52.235133, -0.474321
 📍 **LENGTH** 1.8 miles (track reconfigured May 2015; earlier times not comparable)



SEAT Leon Cupra 280 Ultimate Sub8 (fastest hot hatch)	1:23.1	215	-
BMW M3 (F80) (fastest saloon)	1:23.3	211	Yes
Mercedes-AMG C63 S Saloon	1:24.0	211	Yes
VW Golf GTI Clubsport S	1:24.1	227	-
SEAT Leon Cupra 290 (on optional Michelin Pilot Sport Cup 2 tyres)	1:24.2	227	-
Ford Focus RS (Mk3, on optional Michelin Pilot Sport Cup 2 tyres)	1:24.6	227	-
Honda Civic Type R (FK2, on Michelin Pilot Sport Cup 2 tyres)	1:24.6	227	-
Renaultsport Mégane 275 Trophy-R	1:25.1	227	-
VW Golf R (Mk7)	1:26.1	-	Yes
Audi RS3 Sportback (2015MY)	1:26.6	-	Yes
Ford Fiesta ST Mountune	1:29.5	213	-
Mazda MX-5 2.0i Sport (Mk4) (fastest sports car)	1:29.8	-	Yes

BLYTON PARK OUTER CIRCUIT

📍 **LOCATION** Lincolnshire, UK
 📍 **GPS** 53.460093, -0.688666
 📍 **LENGTH** 1.6 miles



Ariel Atom 3.5R (fastest sports car)	0:58.9	205	-
Radical RXC Turbo (fastest coupe)	1:00.4	205	Yes
BAC Mono	1:01.4	189	-
Porsche 911 GT2 RS (997.2) (fastest supercar)	1:01.8	204	Yes
Porsche 911 GT3 (991)	1:01.9	205	Yes
Caterham Seven 620R	1:02.1	189	-
Nissan GT-R Nismo	1:02.1	205	Yes
Mercedes SLS AMG Black Series	1:02.5	204	Yes
Pagani Huayra	1:02.5	177	-
McLaren 12C	1:02.7	187	-
Radical RXC	1:02.9	189	-
Ariel Atom 3.5 310	1:03.4	189	-
Audi R8 V10 Plus (Mk1)	1:03.4	-	Yes
Porsche Cayman GT4	1:03.6	221	Yes
Lotus Exige S (V6)	1:04.4	177	-
Porsche 911 Carrera (991)	1:05.1	177	-
Chevrolet Camaro Z/28	1:05.1	220	Yes
Porsche 911 GT3 (997)	1:05.2	-	Yes
Porsche Boxster S (981)	1:05.5	177	-
Porsche Cayman GTS (981)	1:05.5	-	Yes
Porsche Cayman S (981)	1:05.5	189	-
Caterham Seven 420R	1:05.7	220	Yes
Jaguar F-type S Convertible	1:06.5	-	Yes
Vuuhl 05	1:06.5	220	Yes
Zenos E10 S	1:06.6	214	-
Mercedes-Benz C63 AMG Black Series	1:06.9	177	-
Renaultsport Mégane 275 Trophy-R (fastest hot hatch)	1:07.3	205	Yes
SEAT Leon Cupra 280 Sub8	1:07.6	220	-
BMW M135i	1:07.7	177	-
Porsche Cayman (981)	1:07.7	-	Yes
BMW M235i	1:08.7	-	Yes
Mini John Cooper Works GP (R56)	1:08.7	181	-
Renaultsport Mégane R26.R	1:08.9	181	-
Ford Focus RS500	1:09.4	181	-
VW Golf GTI Performance Pack (Mk7)	1:10.3	192	-
Toyota GT86	1:12.8	177	-

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Art of Speed

by RICHARD LANE



Honda Type R gearknob

D 'DON'T REST YOUR HAND ON THE GEARKNOB BECAUSE you'll knacker the forks.' You hear this from time to time and it does sound irritatingly prudish. It's sage advice, though. Firstly because you'll never look as badass as *Vanishing Point*'s Kowalski and secondly because it's true. Using the gearstick as a rest causes the selector fork within the transmission to rub against the synchro ring, and that makes it wear prematurely.

The urge, you suspect, to do precisely this must be so very strong for owners of Honda's DC2 Integra Type R. There is no glob of nondescript tat. Rather a beautifully machined lozenge of titanium that the late Russell Bulgin once described as 'smooth as flesh, cold as marble'. And you couldn't wish for a finer control with which to stir the Integra's five forward speeds and keep that 1.8-litre VTEC screamer on the boil. Glinting in a sea of black plastic, this is a gearknob that begs to be cupped in the same way the car begs to be thrashed – continuously.

The mechanism it orchestrates is exceptional, too, by any standard. Tight actions for the shift and clutch are paired with position-perfect brake and throttle pedals. The titanium knob has a meaty feel, requiring a little heft to set into motion but then almost hauling itself forward or back to select the next ratio unaided. It gives you rhythm, and acts as a sort of baton pass from machine to man.

So often it's the details that get people like us feverish, of course, and so often has Honda demonstrated it understands this explicitly. Exotic

gearlevers have long been employed as a brand signature, and though Ferrari's open-gate is peerless in this regard, the titanium-topped short-throw masterpieces from Suzuka hold a special place in our hearts here at *evo*.

First seen in the NSX-R, the intention was to evoke the manual shifters of the MP4-series McLaren-Honda F1 cars that took Prost and Senna to glory. Titanium is desirable for competition use because of its low thermal conductivity compared with aluminium, and also its lightness and hardness. These qualities weren't essential for the clammy palms of you or me on the B660, but what a classy touch. Especially in a front-wheel-drive coupe costing just £18,875.

Even though it harks from what will go down as a purple patch for performance Hondas, the DC2 Integra still seems freakishly single-minded. Lightweight flywheel and exhaust, no damping for the transmission mount or driveshaft, thinner windscreen glass, hand-ported engine, 9000rpm limiter, aluminium wheels, no sound-deadening to speak of, a chassis to die for. The spec-sheet reads like a touring car's.

Honda switched to aluminium shortly after the S2000 arrived in 1999 (not only was it cheaper, but lighter, too), but the crimson-etched titanium gearknobs in the EK9 Civic, CH1 Accord and DC2 Integra Type R models are very much the real deal. And around £300 to replace. So if you're importing one of these Japanese cult cars, just make sure it hasn't been interfered with at Yokohama docks first. ☒

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